LIVES

OF

SCOTTISH WORTHIES

London:
Printed by A. & R. Spottiswoode,
New-Street-Square.

LIVES

OF

SCOTTISH WORTHIES.

BY

PATRICK FRASER TYTLER, ESQ.

F.R.S. AND F.S.A.

VOL. I

LONDON:

JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET.

MDCCCXXXII.

EDINBURGH:
PRINTED BY BALLANTYNE AND CO. PAUL'S WORK, CANONGATE.

TO THE

REV. ARCHIBALD ALISON, LL.B.

PREBENDARY OF SARUM, RECTOR OF RODINGTON, AND SENIOR MINISTER OF ST PAUL'S CHAPEL, EDINBURGH,

THESE LIVES

ARE

AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED,

BY

THE AUTHOR.

CONTENTS.

—

ALEXANDER THE THIRD.

1249—1285.

MICHAEL SCOTT.

SIR WILLIAM WALLACE.

SECTION I.

PAGE

SECTION II

ROBERT BRUCE.

Section I.

DIRECTIONS TO THE BINDER.

1. Great Seal of Alexander I., to front Title to Alexander I.

2. Norwegian Barrow on the Field of Largs, to front page 49.

3. Seal of John Baliol used by Sir William Wallace, to front Title to Wallace.

4. Abbey Craig, near Stirling, Scene where Wallace defeated the English, 11th September, 1297, to front page 210.

5. Seal of King Robert I., to front Title to Bruce.

6. Turnberry Castle, to front page 292.

ALEXANDER THE THIRD.

Quhen Alysandyr oure Kyng wes dede,
That Scotland led in luve and le,
Away wes sons of ale and brede,
Of wyne and wax, of gamyn and gle;

Oure gold wes changyd in-to lede.
Cryst, borne in-to virgynyte,
Succour Scotland, and remede,
That stad is in perplexyte.

WYNTON'S *Cronykil*, b. vii. c. x.



ALEXANDER THE THIRD.

1249—1285.



Birth of Alexander III.—State of Scotland at his Accession—Unjust Claims of Henry III. of England—Coronation of Alexander—Marriage with Margaret, Daughter of Henry III.—Conspiracy of Durward—Intrigues of England—State of the Country—Great Invasion of Scotland by Haco, King of Norway—Its Causes—its History—its Consequences—Death of Haco in Orkney—Annexation of the Western Isles to the Scottish Crown—Contest of Alexander with the Popedom—Accession of Edward I. to the English Throne—Alexander attends his Coronation—Marriage between the Princess Margaret of Scotland, and Eric, King of Norway—The Prince of Scotland marries the Daughter of the Earl of Flanders—Alexander's attention to the Cares of Government—Administration of Justice—Agriculture—Commerce—Sudden Calamities in the Royal Family—Meeting of the Scottish Nobles to regulate the Succession—They acknowledge Margaret, Daughter of Eric, King of Norway, the Heir to the Crown—Alexander marries Joleta, Daughter of the Count de Dreux—Death of Alexander—His Character—State of the Kingdom under his Reign—The Clergy—Learning and

Knowledge—Superstition—Romantic Fiction—Chivalry—Arts encouraged by the Clergy—State of the Lower Classes—Revenue of the Sovereign.

ALTHOUGH the life of Alexander III. cannot be estimated as the boundary between the authentic and the fabulous in Scottish history, yet it may be truly said, that with the reign of this able prince the history of the country, when compared with the eras which precede it, assumes a more interesting and attractive form to the general reader. Its connexion with England begins then to be more intimate and uninterrupted,—the ambitious designs of that great country over her less powerful and wealthy neighbour, become more clearly defined,—the alliances between Scotland and the continental kingdoms, are more frequent and important,—and the materials from which we may derive some certain information regarding the state of manners and society in these remote times, at once more copious and authentic. In commencing, therefore, a series of biographies of the most eminent Scotsmen, whose lives are identified with the civil or the literary history of their country, it would be difficult to select an individual with whom we might more properly begin than Alexander III.

This monarch was a boy of only eight years old, when the death of his father, Alexander II. opened to him the undisputed succession to the crown. He was born at Roxburgh, on the 4th of September, 1241.* His mother was Mary de

* Chron. Melros, p. 205.

Couci, daughter of a potent lord of Picardy, named Ingelram de Couci—a family which rivalled, in wealth, splendour, and antiquity, the royal house of France. The motto of the House of Couci, which was broidered on their banners, and shouted by their vassals as they rode to battle, confirms, by its proud humility, this character of the family :—

> "Je ni suis Roy ni Prince aussi,
> Je suis le Seigneur de Couci."*

Alexander II. had been cut off by a rapid and malignant fever, when engaged in an expedition for the reduction of those independent pirate kings, who, as it suited their own convenience, professed at one time to hold their insular dominions as vassals of the King of Norway, and at another were content to acknowledge the superiority of the crown of Scotland. Mathew Paris, a contemporary historian, whose works, deformed as they are by a barbarous latinity, abound in the richest feudal descriptions, has left us an animated character of Alexander II. "He was," says he, "a good king, just, pious, fond of giving magnificent entertainments, beloved, and deservedly so, by the English, as well as by his own subjects—over whom he reigned for many years prosperously and in peace, although it was reported that, in his last days, avarice and the love of money had caused him to wander from the path of justice."†

* "Neither king nor prince ye see,
But the Baron of Couci."

† Mathew Paris, Historia Major. Editio a Wats, pp. 568, 667.

These last expressions of the monkish historian, which he justifies by a detail of the expedition of the Scottish monarch against Angus of Argyle, are not to be considered as completely impartial; for it was the invariable policy of the English kings to support the northern reguli, and the chiefs of the Isles, against the Scottish crown, and to consider any attempts to reduce them to obedience as unjust and ambitious aggressions.

But, however this may be, the circumstances under which the country found itself suddenly deprived of a wise and magnanimous prince, and saw the reins of government fall into the feeble hands of a minor, were peculiarly inauspicious. Henry III. of England, although a monarch of a capricious and inconsistent character, at times permitted himself to be directed by able councillors; and even during the life of Alexander II., had attempted to revive that obsolete and pretended claim to the feudal superiority over Scotland, as a fief of the English crown, which had been extorted from a captive Scottish monarch, and afterwards renounced for ever, in the broadest and most unequivocal terms, by Richard Cœur de Lion. There was, therefore, every reason to believe, that, although defeated by the resolution and prompt resistance of the father, the design might probably be resumed under the minority of the son. But if weakened by the vicinity of so powerful a kingdom as England, the Scottish government was equally insecure in the precarious tenure by which it held the more northern counties of Caithness and Sutherland, as well as the strong and mountainous country of Argyle,

including the warlike district of the Western Highlands and the Isles. Previous to the accession of Alexander III., under the reigns of Malcolm IV., William the Lion, and his son Alexander II., these extensive dominions were inhabited by a population which was principally Norwegian, although, at the same time, many Celtic chiefs maintained their ground amongst the Norsemen, and either acknowledged the superiority of the crown of Norway, or proudly asserted their own independence. On this quarter, therefore, the administration of the youthful monarch was perpetually exposed to foreign attack; and if to these elements of discord and confusion we add the disputes and rivalries of a haughty and ambitious aristocracy, it is not easy to conceive a greater complication of difficulties than that which attended the accession of Alexander III. to the throne of his ancestors.

Upon receiving intelligence of the death of the late king, the English monarch lost no time in dispatching an envoy to Innocent IV., who then filled the Papal throne, soliciting a mandate from the Holy See, to delay the coronation of the young king, until he had expressly obtained permission from Henry, as his feudal superior; and at the same time requesting a grant of the tenth of the ecclesiastical revenues of Scotland. The pope peremptorily rejected both petitions; and the coronation was suffered to proceed. A numerous and brilliant concourse of the nobility conducted their youthful sovereign to the ancient Abbey of Scone, on the 3d of July, 1249. But when the ceremony was about to be performed,

an unexpected embarrassment arose, which strikingly illustrates the manners of the times. Sir Alan Durward, Great Justitiar of the kingdom, who was at this time esteemed the best and bravest knight amongst the Scottish chivalry, alleged that the day chosen for the inauguration was unlucky, and that the king could not be crowned before he had received the spurs and belt of knighthood. The argument of the Justitiar was opposed by Walter Comyn, Earl of Menteith. This patriotic baron cited the example of William Rufus, who, on one and the same day, had been knighted by Lanfranc, Archbishop of Canterbury, and anointed King of England; and urging the danger of delay, proposed that David de Bernham, the Bishop of St Andrews, should perform both ceremonies. To this the nobility, after a lengthened discussion, agreed. The prelate girded the royal boy with the belt, and fixed on him the golden spurs of a knight. He then administered to him the coronation oath, first in Latin, and afterwards in Norman French; and this being concluded, he anointed him with the sacred oil, and placed the crown upon his head. A singular and solemn part of the ceremony still remained. From times far anterior to any written history, there had been preserved in the Abbey of Scone an ancient stone chair, which was considered the palladium of Celtic Scotland, and seated on which, it had for many ages been the custom of the Scottish monarchs to receive the oaths of their nobility on the day of their coronation. To this rude but venerated throne, the assembled prelates and barons conducted the king, and throwing over it a rich cloth of silk

and gold, placed him thereon, clothed in a purple mantle, with the royal crown upon his head, and the sceptre in his hand. They then arranged their seats around the throne, and casting their robes on the ground, first knelt before him, and then sat down to hear the sermon from the bishop. At this moment, a Highland sennachy, or bard, of venerable age and commanding height and presence, started from the crowd. His breast and shoulders were covered by his long white hair. His silver beard almost swept the ground. A scarlet mantle was thrown round him, and, advancing to the foot of the regal chair, he hailed the king in the Celtic language, and with a loud voice repeated his genealogy, deducing it through fifty-six generations from Fergus, the first king of the Scots in Albyn. Not contented, however, with this heraldic feat, he next commenced from Fergus, and rapidly enumerated his descent from Heber Scot, the son of Gaithelglas, who was himself the son of Neol, king of the Athenians, and Scota, daughter of Pharaoh, king of Egypt.* To all these absurdities of the savage genealogist, the young monarch and his court appear to have lent a patient and attentive ear, and the ceremony was then concluded with the usual feasting and revelry.

Defeated in his purpose of delaying the coronation, by the honesty of the pope, Henry III. now proposed that the marriage between the young monarch, and his daughter the princess Margaret, which had been already agreed on du-

* Fordun a Goodal, vol. ii. pp. 81, 82.

ring the lifetime of Alexander II. should be carried into immediate effect. To this the councillors of the minor king consented, and the solemnity of the coronation was soon after succeeded by the more brilliant pomp of a royal wedding at York. Of this ceremony, the contemporary historians have left a minute and graphic description, and it appears to have exceeded in splendour any thing before seen in England. The King and Queen of England, Mary de Couci, the Queen Dowager of Scotland, the whole body of the nobility in both kingdoms, the prelates and dignified clergy, and besides this, a train of French nobles and knights who waited on the Scottish Queen, were received and entertained by the Archbishop of York, who is recorded to have spent, in feasting and in presents, the excessive sum of four thousand merks, equal to upwards of forty thousand pounds of our present money, but to an infinitely higher sum, if estimated by the quantity of food or of labour which it could then purchase. The bride was attended on the marriage-day by a thousand knights, clad in robes of silk, which, on the succeeding morning, they changed for new mantles of a different and richer kind. Sixty knights waited on the Scottish king; and it may give us some idea of the abundant profusion of the dinners of these ancient times, when it is mentioned, that for one article of one day's feast, the archbishop slew sixty stalled oxen. In the midst of these rejoicings, Henry, trusting no doubt to the facility and tender judgment of the royal bridegroom, made an insidious proposal, that at the time when he paid homage

for the various lands which he held of the crown of England, he should also take the oath of fealty for his kingdom of Scotland. But, young as he was, Alexander was aware of the injustice of such a demand, and his answer surprised all who heard him. "I came here," said he, "by the invitation of the King of England, in all peace and good faith, to enter into an alliance by marriage, and not to answer any such arduous question as is now proposed, upon which it is impossible for me to give any reply without the solemn advice of my council." It is not improbable, that some of the Scottish nobles, aware of the meditated attack, had advised the young king of the manner in which he should meet it; and his firmness was attended with the desired success, for Henry dissembled his mortification, and deferred the subject till a more convenient opportunity.*

During the marriage festival at York, if we may believe the testimony of an ancient chronicle, the penetration of Comyn, Earl of Menteith, and the acuteness of the English monarch, brought to light a dark and mysterious conspiracy against the Crown of Scotland. Its author was Durward, the High Justitiar, whom we have already seen proposing to delay the coronation. This powerful and ambitious baron had married the natural sister of the king, and it would appear that he had entered into a secret league with Gamelin, the Chancellor, to procure from the Holy See a deed of legitimation of his wife, with the design, that if Alexander should die childless, his child-

* Mathew Paris, p. 716.

ren might succeed to the vacant throne. Upon this ground, the Earl of Menteith openly impeached him of treason; and little doubt seems to have been entertained, that if Durward could have succeeded in procuring such a deed, he would not have scrupled to cut off both the king and queen.* Whether this story is true to so dark an extent, it is not easy to discover; but the consequences of the accusation were serious. The Chancellor of Scotland resigned his high office, and, leaving his abbey, assumed the habit of a monk at Newbattle. Others, who were implicated in the suspicions, fled with precipitation to Scotland; and Sir Alan Durward himself was detained in custody by Henry, whom he soon afterwards accompanied in his expedition against Guienne. Meanwhile, the youthful couple returned to their kingdom, the chief management of affairs being committed to Comyn, Earl of Menteith, in whom, at this period, great confidence appears to have been justly placed.

But this pacific state of affairs was not of long continuance. Durward, by his bravery and good conduct, acquired a strong influence over the capricious and wavering temper of the English monarch. Communicating with his friends and adherents whom he had left in Scotland, he induced them to transmit to the English court the most unfounded slanders against the councillors of the young king. Reports arrived daily from Scotland, which accused the party of Comyn of confining the queen in a sad and solitary fortress,

* Chron, Melros, p. 219.

unwholesome from its vicinity to the sea—of preventing those progresses or excursions by which she might become acquainted with her new subjects—and of even secluding her from all familiar intercourse with her husband. To what extent Henry believed these injurious imputations, cannot be discovered; but he affected to be greatly irritated at the treatment experienced by his daughter, and he appears to have determined not only to make himself master of the person of the King of Scotland, but to obtain from the pope a dissolution of his marriage.* To accomplish this, Durward secretly repaired to Scotland, and placed himself at the head of the nobles who were in the interest of England; whilst Henry at the same moment assembled an army, and proceeded towards the borders. These hostile preparations naturally gave the alarm to the Comyns and their adherents, and a solemn council upon the affairs of the kingdom was appointed to be held at Stirling; but it was anticipated by a daring enterprise of Durward, who surprised and stormed the castle of Edinburgh, made himself master of the persons of the king and queen, and instantly carried them off to meet the English monarch, who was then with his army at Werk Castle, on the borders. So sudden and successful a revolution was followed, as might be anticipated, by a complete change of measures and of ministers. A regency, which was chiefly, if not exclusively, under English influence, was appointed at Roxburgh. Certain secret articles, which were derogatory to the

* Rymer, Fœdera Angliæ, vol. i. p. 559.

honour and independence of his kingdom, were extorted from the youthful prince; and the King of England, enraged, to use the words of the Chronicle of Melros, that the Earl of Menteith, the Prelates of St Andrews and Glasgow, with other nobles, refused to affix their seals to so infamous a deed, excluded them from all power or authority in the state.*

For many years after this, the same ebullitions of aristocratic disorder and ambition, which invariably occurred in every feudal government during the minority of the sovereign, took place in Scotland. Of the various parties amongst the nobility, the constant object was to make themselves master of the king's person; an attempt which, if it proved successful, at once gave them the principal power in the state,—enabled them to reward their friends, by the plunder of the crown lands, by the forfeiture of the estates of their opponents, and by the shameless venality with which they did not scruple to dispose of the principal offices in the kingdom. When unsuccessful, they either fell victims to immediate and unpitying revenge, or, if they had the good fortune to escape, retreated within the strong walls of their feudal fortresses, and defied the malice of their enemies. It would fatigue, and could not instruct, the reader, to enter into any detailed account of the various intrigues and conspiracies which occupied the minority of this monarch, and I hasten to an event of far deeper interest and importance, which threatened to make an entire change in the destiny of the

* Chron. Melros, p. 221.

country, and to wrest for ever from the Scottish crown a very ample and flourishing portion of its dominions. I allude to the great invasion of Scotland in the year 1263, by Haco, King of Norway.

To understand this singular event in its causes, and to appreciate the consequences which resulted from it in their full extent, it is necessary to recollect, that at this remote period of our history, the Western Isles, and a great part of the mainland of Scotland, were scarcely to be considered as the established and regular dominions of the Scottish crown. From the most northern extremity of Caithness, to the utmost point of the Mull of Cantyre, the wide extent of the shores facing the Atlantic were, in a great measure, dependent upon the Norwegian crown, and inhabited by a hardy and adventurous race, who were as much Norsemen as either Celts or lowland Scots. The Shetland and Orkney Islands, along with the Western, or "Oute Isles," as they are denominated in ancient chronicles, including Long Island, or Inisfada, Sky, Mull, Isla, and the other numerous rich and fertile spots, which are so thickly scattered in those seas, were, from a period long anterior to the accession of Malcolm Canmore, in the undisputed possession of the same brave and enterprising nation. The early conquest of the isles of Scotland by the Norwegians, and their condition under their new possessors, is thus clearly and ably described by Macpherson: "As the possession of islands must ever follow the dominion of the sea, all the islands adjacent to Scotland were frequently plundered, and at length, about the year 900, com-

pletely occupied, by piratical rovers and exiles from Norway, who were unwilling to submit to Harold Harfagar, then established monarch of all the petty kingdoms of Norway. Harold, some time after, made an expedition against Orkney and Hiatland, or Schetland, which he subdued, and erected into an jarland, or earldom, to be held of the Crown of Norway. He also sent an officer called Ketil, whose ample possessions in Norway he wanted to seize for himself, to subdue the islands on the west side of Scotland, and to govern them in his name. Ketil, having established himself, and conciliated the affections of the principal people in the islands, set up for an independent king; and his successors, during many centuries, retained the regal title and dignity, generally acknowledging, however, the feudal superiority of the Kings of Norway, and fixing the seat of their little maritime empire in Man. Under the government of these Norwegian princes, the isles appear to have been very flourishing. They were crowded with people; the arts were cultivated, and manufactures were carried to a degree of perfection which was then thought excellence. This comparatively advanced state of society in these remote isles, may be ascribed partly to the influence and instructions of the Irish clergy, who were established all over the islands before the arrival of the Norwegians, and possessed as much learning as in those ages was to be found in any part of Europe, except Constantinople and Rome; and partly to the arrival of great numbers of the provincial Britons flying to them as an asylum, when their country was ravaged by the Saxons,

and carrying with them the remains of the manufactures and wealth, introduced among them by their Roman masters. Neither were the Norwegians, in those ages, destitute of a considerable portion of learning and of skill in the useful arts, in navigation, fisheries, and manufactures; nor were they in any respect such barbarians, as those who know them only by the declamations of the early English writers may be apt to suppose them. The principal source of their wealth was piracy, then esteemed an honourable profession, in the exercise of which, these islanders laid all the maritime countries of the west parts of Europe under heavy contributions. But not satisfying themselves with predatory excursions, they also discharged their redundant population on all the neighbouring countries in permanent settlements. Oleif, the husband of Audur, surnamed Diupandga, (i.e. exceedingly rich,) who was the daughter of Ketil, led a colony to Ireland, and established himself as King of Dublin. In Scotland, Thorstein, the daughter of Oleif and Audur, in conjunction with Sigurd, Earl of Orkney, got possession of Caithness; and this heroine, having established her grandchildren in the Orkneys and Ferroes, was one of the many leaders of colonies from the Sudureyar, or South Isles, to Iceland—where it is remarkable that the new inhabitants had dedicated the first church built in that island to St Columba; and from this remote island, there is strong reason to believe, that the first discovery of America was made by Biorn, son of Heriolf, about the year 1000, almost five hundred years before the voyage of the more celebrated

Columbus.* In this brief notice of colonies from the islands, it would be unpardonable to omit the band of Sudureyan rovers, who accompanied a Norwegian adventurer called Hrolf, afterwards Rollo, a son of the first Earl of Orkney, to the conquest of Neustria, from him and his followers called Normandy. The great-grandsons of those fierce warriors of the isles, composed a part of the army which, in 1066, gave a Norman race of kings to England, and, although not by conquest, eventually to Scotland; besides supplying both kingdoms with a great proportion of their nobility. The successors of Ketil appear to have preserved the kingdom of Man and the isles entire, and tolerably prosperous, till 1156, when a division of it took place, in which Somerled, Prince or Lord of Ergyle, who was connected, by descent and marriage, with the Earls of Orkney and the Kings of Man, and possessed of a considerable naval force, obtained all the isles lying south from the point of Ardnamurchan,—the northern ones remaining, with Man, to the old family. These divisions again were frequently subdivided, all partitions of territory among such powerful vassals, being encouraged by the policy of the Norwegian kings; and thus there were often several princes or chiefs at the same time invested with the title of King of the Isles, independent of each other, but still acknowledging the Norwegian crown."†

* Macpherson's Annals of Commerce, vol. i. p. 279.

† Geographical Illustrations of Scottish History. Article, "Ilis."

It resulted from this state of things, that the Kings of Norway justly considered the whole of the Western Isles as part of their dominions, and tributary to their crown, although they were not always able to enforce this right; whilst, on the other hand, the Scottish monarchs exerted themselves, by every possible means, to detach them from their dependence. At one time, by treaty with Norway, or by private intrigues amongst its island vassals—at another, by open attempts at conquest—on a third occasion, by subsidising some of the most powerful northern chiefs, and employing their fleets of piratic vessels in an attack on the little island thrones, they left no method unattempted to gain so important an object. Nor will any one who is acquainted, even in a partial degree, with the early history of Scotland, be disposed to wonder at this anxiety. The vicinity of such powerful neighbours, and their habits of piratic excursion, exposed the northern counties to perpetual attack, which had resulted, as we have seen, in a permanent settlement on the mainland of Caithness. But, in addition to this annoyance, it must be recollected, that the allegiance even of those northern chiefs who were the acknowledged vassals of Scotland—the Lords of Galloway, the Barons of Argyle and of Moray, the Earls of Ross, and other powerful feudal potentates—was itself not unfrequently in a very wavering condition; and that an open rebellion against the crown, was an idea which was readily entertained, and not unfrequently realized. In such circumstances, they were ever eager to throw themselves into the arms of the island kings; and,

strengthened by so powerful an alliance, they could command a fleet, or bring an army into the field, which enabled them successfully to defy the utmost efforts of their offended sovereign. In the occurrence, also, of those wars with England, in which it was the fate of Scotland to be so constantly engaged, the vicinity of the isles was dangerous in the extreme, as the English monarchs almost invariably succeeded in attaching to their interest the most powerful of the island princes, and engaged them to distract and divide the Scottish councils and the Scottish armies, by an attack upon the northern counties, whilst the English army invaded the country by the borders. In every point of view, therefore, it became a most important object for Scotland to obtain possession of the isles; and the ability and energy of Alexander II., the immediate predecessor of Alexander III., appear to have been especially directed to its attainment. He had succeeded in detaching many of the little sea kings and piratic chiefs from their allegiance to the crown of Norway, by bribing them with grants of lands, and inducing them to become the vassals of Scotland. Others, who remained under the superiority of the Norwegian crown, were yet prevailed on at the same time to hold lands in Scotland; the king trusting that, in the event of war, he would be able either to secure their neutrality, or to compel them to assist him as their overlord; whilst other piratic chiefs, whom he had completely bound to his interest, were commissioned to attack the more steady adherents of Norway—to ravage their dominions by fire and sword, and thus to reduce them

to that state of weakness and misery, in which they were ready to supplicate the forgiveness, and embrace the friendship, of the Scottish monarch.

Acting under the influence of such policy, it appears that, in 1228, Alan, Earl of Galloway, whose fleet amounted to a hundred and fifty ships, and who was then a faithful vassal of Scotland, had, in the absence of Olave the Black, King of Man, attacked his dominions, and made a conquest of the island. To revenge this insult, Haco, King of Norway, dispatched an expedition to the Western Isles, in 1230. The progress of the fleet appears to have been first to Orkney, from this to Sky, thence to the Sound of Isla, and the Mull of Cantyre, and afterwards to the Isle of Man. The Norwegian monarch succeeded in re-establishing Olave, his vassal, as King of Man; but, in other respects, the progress of the armament, which amounted to eighty ships, was far from victorious. They were violently opposed in Isla, and seem to have found, that the chiefs and vassals of the Somerled family were more attached to Scotland than to Norway: they lost three hundred men in the siege of the castle of Dunaverty, which was bravely defended by one of the chiefs of the Stewarts, who at this remote period were powerful in those quarters of the country; and in a descent, which, on their return from Man, they attempted in Cantyre, they were repulsed with loss, and compelled to return to Norway.*

* Dillon's Observations on the Norwegian Expedition against Scotland in 1263. Antiquarian Transactions, vol. ii. p. 2, p. 360.

But the feebleness of Scotland in her naval power, and the numerous and formidable fleets which Norway commanded, rendered it almost impossible for Alexander II. to maintain, for any length of time, the advantages which he had won; and, conscious of this, he made various attempts by treaty to prevail on the king of Norway to acknowledge the property of the Scottish crown in the Western Isles. Haco, however, peremptorily refused; alleging that when King Magnus Barefoot made a conquest of those islands, in his great expedition against Ireland in 1102, the King of Scotland had no sovereignty in them:* and a subsequent proposal of Alexander to purchase a surrender by the payment of a large sum of money, was indignantly rejected. The Scottish monarch had now recourse to arms, and having assembled a powerful fleet, he declared that he would conquer the isles, and plant his standard on the cliffs of Thurso; a threat demonstrating in the most unequivocal manner, that the mainland of Caithness was then (in 1249) a Norwegian province.† The king, as we have already seen, when engaged in this expedition, having proceeded only as far as the little island of Kiararey, off the coast of Lorn, was seized with a mortal illness, and died.‡

* Snorro Sturleson Heimskringla, seu Historia Regum Norvegicorum, vol. iii. p. 226.

† Norse Chronicle of the Expedition against Scotland in 1263. Published by Johnston.

‡ The account of his death, as it is given in the Norwegian Chronicle, is striking and romantic:—"King Alexander," it says, "then lying in Kiararey Sound, dreamed a

Upon the death of Alexander II., the fleet and army seem to have immediately returned; and during the minority of Alexander III., no further hostile operations were resumed. The object, however, was not lost sight of; and after an unsuccessful embassy to Norway, in 1262, the Earl of Ross, along with those pirate chiefs who had acknowledged the superiority of the Scottish crown, assembled a fleet and an army, with which he cruelly ravaged the western archipelago, driving from their island homes the petty reguli who acknowledged an allegiance to Haco, wasting their dominions with fire and sword, and compelling them in extreme misery to carry their complaints to the monarch of Norway. Incensed

dream, and thought three men came unto him. He thought one of them was in royal robes, but very stern, ruddy in countenance, something thick, and of middling size. Another seemed of a slender make, but active, and of all men the most engaging and majestic. The third, again, was of very great stature, but his features were distorted, and of all the rest he was the most unsightly. They addressed their speech to the king, and enquired whether he meant to invade the Hebrides. Alexander thought he answered, that he certainly proposed to subject the islands. The genius of the vision bade him go back, and told him no other measure would turn to his advantage. The king related his dream, and many advised him to return, but the king would not; and a little time after he was seized with a disorder, and died. The Scottish army then broke up, and they removed the king's body to Scotland. The Hebridians say, that the men whom the king saw in his sleep, were Saint Olave, King of Norway; Saint Magnus, Earl of Orkney; and Saint Columba." *

* Norse Chronicle of the Expedition against Scotland, p. 15.

at such conduct, Haco, a prince of great courage and magnanimity, declared that he would proceed in person to the relief of his distressed vassals, and this with a force which should enable him to establish for ever the wavering dominion of the Norwegian crown over the Western Isles, and to inflict a just and terrible vengeance upon their aggressors.

For this purpose, his preparations were commenced upon the most ample scale. He issued his edict, says the Norwegian Chronicle, through all Norway, and gave orders for the levying as many troops, and the collecting as much provisions, as he thought his dominions could possibly supply for an expedition. The edict was published at Christmas, or the Feast of Jol, (the Scottish Yule,) and the king commanded his forces to meet him at Bergen, the capital of his kingdom, in the spring. Since the days of Harold Harfagar, the territory of Norway had been divided into various counties, each of which was bound on any great emergency to fit out a squadron of ships, whilst these counties again were subdivided into smaller divisions, named in the Norse, Skipreidor, which were obliged to furnish each a single vessel, completely manned and equipped. Haco committed to Prince Magnus, the heir of the throne, and his only son, the superintendence of the levies; and the spring months of May and June were uninterruptedly occupied in the assembling of the troops. From the extremest point of Finland to the most western streams of Gotelfa, to use the poetical language of Sturlas, the ships of the protector of thrones were waft-

ed into the harbour of Herlover, beside Bergen; barons, officers, and vassals, flocked into the capital, leading, from the most distant parts of Norway, their bands of brave and hardy soldiers; and, when a general review of the whole armament was held at Herlover by the king, it was universally declared that so numerous and splendid a fleet had never sailed from Norway.

At this period, the Norwegians were perhaps the best ship-builders, and the most skilful navigators, in the world. Their war-galleys were generally long, narrow, and low in the water, adorned with rich carved figure-heads, and having round the sides a parapet or breast-work of shields; swords, bows, arrows, and pikes, formed the arms of the crew; besides which, they took on board a quantity of stones to throw into the vessels of the enemy.* In this expedition, King Haco's own ship was of great dimensions. He had caused it to be built at Bergen entirely of oak; it contained twenty-seven banks of oars, and was ornamented with the heads and necks of dragons, richly overlaid with gold. Early in the month of July, the preparations were completed; the embarkation of the victuals and the war stores was concluded; each ship received on board its complement of officers, soldiers, and mariners; the pilots, who had been sent for from Shetland, were distributed through the fleet; and on the 7th of July, having obtained a favourable breeze, the whole armament weighed anchor, and stood out of Herlover, the

* Macpherson's Annals of Commerce, vol. i. p. 278.

king leading in person. At first every thing seemed to favour the expedition: the weather was calm and beautiful; innumerable banners and gonfanons, richly broidered with a thousand various colours, floated in the breeze; the sails of many of the ships were decorated with the arms and devices of their chiefs; their gilded beaks and figure-heads shone and glittered like fire, and the rays of the sun were reflected with insufferable brightness from the parapet of shields which surrounded the sides of the vessels, and from the groves of steel formed by the pikes and lance-heads, and the polished ringed corslets of the knights and men-at-arms. Whilst the shore and the harbour were crowded with multitudes, who flocked to Herlover to witness the departure of their king, and who waved their hands, and prayed aloud for the success of his arms, the trumpets, cymbals, and other war instruments, came sounding over the bosom of the deep, inspiring the mind with that sentiment of pleasing terror, which so strikingly accompanies the pomp and circumstance of war; and, as the breeze freshened, the whole fleet bore proudly away for Shetland, which they reached, after having been two nights at sea, coming to an anchor in Bredeyiar, now Brassa Sound.*

It may be well imagined that this potent armament could not have been fitted out, nor have taken its departure from Norway, without great alarm being occasioned in the country against which it was directed. It was in no respect a secret

* Norse Chronicle of the Expedition, p. 39.

expedition. Previous to his sailing, King Haco had assembled a general council at Bergen, where, after having settled many regulations respecting the internal government of the country during his absence, he informed them that the whole army was intended against Scotland and the isles in the Western Seas. The news of his mighty preparations was soon carried to that country; and Alexander III., no longer a minor, but in the vigour of youth, adopted the most prompt and energetic measures of defence. Beacons were established on the most prominent stations along the coast, which communicated with the interior; the various strongholds, which, from their situation, might be exposed to attack, were inspected, their garrisons strengthened, the arms, cross-bows, coats of mail, the trebuchets, mangonels, and other warlike machines for the defence of fortified places, were furbished, sharpened, or put into complete repair; and the strong and important castles of Ayr, Aberdeen, Inverness, Wigton, and Stirling, surveyed, and made available against a siege. These operations appear not only to have been the result of the resolutions of a solemn meeting of the king's council, which was held at this time, but to have been personally directed and superintended by the young monarch with the utmost vigilance and anxiety; and, by the fragment of a chamberlain roll, which has survived the wreck of most of the records of this period, we learn that Alexander sent, of his own good favour, to Master Peter, the mason who was engaged in the repairs of the castle of Wigton, five merks, that he might com-

plete his work before the descent of the Norwegians.*

Another wise precaution adopted by Alexander was, to secure the fidelity of the most powerful island princes, by taking their sons or others of their nearest relations as hostages. He had followed this course with the Lords of Sky, Cantyre, and Isla; and he appears also to have extorted from some of these chiefs, whose fidelity he had reason to suspect, letters, under their hand and seal, by which they agreed to forfeit their estates if they committed aught against their allegiance to the King of Scotland.† His great want was in ships; for at this time there was no navy in Scotland, and it is probable that the king trusted for the supply of this alarming deficiency to the efforts of his island vassals and allies, as well as of the chiefs of Galloway and Argyle—many of whom were powerful at sea, and upon any great emergency, were able to collect a fleet which, as we have already seen, could defy the armament of Norway. The policy of Alexander does not seem, however, to have contemplated the idea of risking a naval engagement with the Norwegians. Of the very few ships which he had himself, he made a better use by stationing them at Ayr, and probably at other places off the coast, where he suspected the Norsemen might attempt their descent, where it was material to obstruct their landing, and afford time for the regular army to come up; and as for the fleets of his

* Chamberlain Accounts, vol. i. p. 48.
† Robertson's Index, Introduction, p. 11.

island allies, although he had taken every precaution to ensure their fidelity, he knew well the impression produced by the presence of an invading armament upon the precarious allegiance of these chiefs, and that a single unfavourable event might transform them in an instant into his determined enemies. His great object was to procure delay; towards the end of the month of August, the autumn storms upon the western coast invariably set in with uncommon violence, and he wisely calculated, that if he could manage either to delay the sailing of the fleet from Norway, to detain it in its passage in Shetland or the Orkneys, or, when it had actually arrived, to protract its operations, by affecting an anxiety for peace, and a desire to agree to the demands of Haco, till he had entangled it amongst the islands of the Western archipelago—the probability was, that the winter storms would commence, and the expedition be unfortunate. For this purpose, he dispatched an embassy of friars predicant to Norway; and he persuaded his father-in-law, Henry III., to address a letter to Haco, remonstrating against his formidable preparations, and complaining of his meditated attack upon the dominions of his dear son and ally, the King of Scotland.*

Having fixed upon this line of policy, and concluded his preparations, Alexander calmly awaited the arrival of his formidable enemy upon the coast, and employed the interval in travelling from station to station, accompanied by a small

* Fœdera Angliæ, vol. i. p. 753.

suite, and by his huntsmen and his falconers, indulging in the pastime of the chase, and by his cheerfulness and magnanimity, inspiring his subjects with that happy confidence which he seemed himself to experience. Meanwhile the King of Norway, having anchored in the Sound of Brassa in Shetland, on the 4th of July, remained there for a fortnight. What was the motive for this protracted stay in Shetland, it is difficult to understand, unless it was occasioned by negotiations with the envoys of Alexander or of Henry; but it was much in favour of Scotland. From Shetland the fleet sailed for Kirkwall in Orkney, where they cast anchor on the 18th of July. Another delay here took place; the king, aware, perhaps, that the season was too far advanced, proposed to his chief officers that a division of the forces should be made; and that, whilst he himself remained in Orkney with the largest ships, and the greater part of the army, the remaining squadron should be sent towards the south, to enter the Frith of Forth, and ravage the country. "The vassals and retainers, however," to use the plain and unaffected expressions of the Norwegian Chronicle, "spoke against this scheme, and made it evident that they would go nowhere, unless with the king himself, so this proposed expedition was abandoned."* The whole fleet, therefore, now sailed from Eledarwic, near Kirkwall, and passing the Mull of Ronaldshaw, where they were joined by Prince Ronald and his squadron,

* Norse Chronicle of the Expedition against Scotland, p. 43.

entered the harbour of Ronaldsvoe, from which boats were dispatched to levy contributions in Caithness. The wisdom of Alexander's calculation as to the precarious allegiance of these remote counties was here proved, for the inhabitants of Caithness, when threatened with so near a vengeance, at once obeyed the summons of the Norsemen, and the collectors returned laden with money and provisions. A remarkable event now took place: "as the fleet lay in Ronaldsvoe, a great darkness drew over the sun, so that only a little ring was bright round its orb, and so it continued for some hours." Such are the striking and simple expressions in which the ancient chronicler describes an annular eclipse of the sun, and by which he has afforded to modern science the power of establishing, on the most unexceptionable grounds, his own veracity. Our historians had hesitated as to the exact date of the expedition between the years 1262 and 1263; but the more ancient have preferred the year 1263, and the eclipse having been calculated, it was found to have taken place on the 5th of August, 1263, and to have been annular at Ronaldsvoe in Orkney.

On the 9th of August, the Norwegian fleet crossed the Pentland Frith, the Pentland Fiord of the chronicle, making for the Lewis, from which they steered for Callachstane, or the Old Woman's Rock, in the Sound of Sky, where Haco was joined by Magnus, King of Man, along with the squadron of the Norwegian leaders, Ronald and Erling, whose ships had been separated at sea from the main body of the armament. He now sailed for the Sound of Mull, from which

he proceeded to Kiararey, the little island off the coast of Lorn, where Alexander II. had died. Here he met the squadron of King Dugal, and the ships of the other island chiefs who acknowledged the dominion of Norway; and on forming a junction with this new force, it was found that the fleet amounted to a hundred vessels, most of them large ships, and all well appointed with men and arms.*

Hitherto the Norsemen had met with little or no opposition. They appeared to have steered their course surrounded on all sides by their friends or vassals; the various princes of the Hebrides flocked from every quarter to join the dreaded flag of the "steel-clad exactor of tribute," and the white sails of his vessels, or, to use the poetical language of Sturlas, "the expanded wings of his sky-blue doves,"† were yet unstained by any thing but the snowy foam of their own element. At Kiararey, however, the details of piratic warfare commenced, and the king, having divided his forces, sent fifty ships to the Mull of Cantyre to plunder, and another squadron against Bute. He himself, with the remainder of the fleet, sailed to Gigha, a small island off Cantyre, and dispatched his summons to John, King of the Isles, commanding him, as it became a loyal vassal, to join him with his ships, and follow his banner. But although faithful to Haco upon a former occasion in 1230, the circumstances in which the ocean princes now stood were widely different,

* Norse Chronicle of the Expedition, p. 49.

† Ibid. pp. 41, 45.

and throw a clear light on the peculiarities of the feudal system, and on the artful policy pursued by the King of Scotland. John had been induced, in the interval between 1230 and 1263, to accept of large estates upon the mainland, for which he had taken his oath to Alexander as his superior, and he now came to Haco in company with a Norwegian prelate, Bishop Thorgill, and pleaded that he could not violate his allegianse to a sovereign from whom he held the greatest part of his lands, requesting Haco to dispose of the estates which he had conferred upon him, and accept the renunciation of his fealty. These arguments apparently were such as the northern monarch, without a breach of every feudal principle, could not refuse to listen to, and the result showed such to be the case; for although he at first detained him aboard the fleet for some time, and endeavoured to make him alter his resolution, he afterwards dismissed him, not only in peace, but with rich presents.

During these transactions at Gigha, the squadrons made a descent on Cantyre, and had carried fire and sword amongst the little hamlets which lay near the coast, slaying the inhabitants, and loading their vessels with the plunder. The beautiful and fertile island of Bute was next invaded and wasted; its strongholds stormed, its hamlets and villages reduced to ashes, and the garrison of a fortress, who had capitulated on promise of their lives, murdered in cold blood by a freebooter named Roderic. This pirate chief, or, as he is gently denominated in the Norse Chro-

nicle, (Skipstiornor) shipmaster, was in a state of bitter hostility with the Scottish monarch. He was the son of Reginald, King of the Isles, and claimed Bute as his inheritance from the Scottish king; but Alexander had refused him the investiture of the island, and, enraged at such conduct, he and his brothers repaired to Haco, bringing with them all that love of plunder, and thirst of vengeance, which might be expected to be found in a robber and renegade. Having recovered the island, Roderic and the Norwegians made a descent upon the mainland, and gave to the flames many towns and castles, running their ships or boats into the narrow arms of the sea which intersect the coast, and afterwards pushing forward into the interior of the country, slaughtering the inhabitants, to use the words of Sturlas, "beside the swan-frequented plain, whilst fire, the devourer of halls, glowed in their granaries."* At this crisis of the expedition, two circumstances produced a delay which was favourable to the Scots. Angus, Lord of Isla, and Margad, Lord of Cantyre, after some negotiation, submitted themselves to Haco, and having paid a large fine in cattle, and delivered hostages, prevailed on the king to recall the squadron which had sailed against Cantyre, and to forbid all plunder in that quarter. A deputation arrived at the same time from the Irish Ostmen, offering to come under the dominion of their Norwegian brethren, if the king would defend them against the English; and Haco imprudently entered into a negotiation upon

* Norse Chronicle of the Expedition, p. 67.

this subject, which necessarily retarded the operations of the fleet.*

It was time now, however, to proceed to more decided measures, and having collected his whole force, which, with the reinforcements that he had received in the isles, now amounted to a hundred and sixty ships, the King of Norway sailed round the Mull of Cantyre, and entering the Frith of Clyde, came to an anchor in the lower part of the Sound of Kilbrannan, lying between the Island of Arran and the coast of Cantyre. Hitherto this formidable armament, having remained in the Hebrides, had only made its presence felt by the different predatory squadrons which it had dispatched to plunder on the coast, but this last movement was of a more decisive and alarming nature. In entering the Frith of Clyde, the fleet became conspicuous from the opposite shores of Kyle and Carrick, and Alexander, dreading an immediate descent, dispatched an embassy of barefooted or predicant friars to open a negotiation with Haco, and to propose terms of peace. Every day's delay was now of the utmost importance to the Scottish monarch. He was uninterruptedly occupied in collecting a force equal to the emergency, if the enemy attempted a descent; but his army was neither ready on the spot to dispute the landing, nor was it so numerous as to make it advisable to risk a battle with the whole body of the Norwegians; and if Haco had seized the opportunity of the fair weather to disembark his troops, and invade the country, the conse-

* Norse Chronicle of the Expedition, pp. 55, 67.

quences might have been perilous, or even fatal. From these difficulties he escaped, by an ability in negotiation which does honour to so young a monarch; and it is evident that Haco, who, to use the words of the Norse Chronicle, "had now been King of Norway six-and-forty winters," was overreached in diplomatic skill by a prince who had scarcely past his minority. The Scottish envoys repeatedly carried messages between the two kings, and in return Haco sent the Bishops of Orkney and of Hamar, along with three of his chief officers, Andrew Nicolson, Paul Soor, and Andrew Plytt, to discuss the grounds of a pacification. "Alexander," says the Norwegian Chronicle, "received them honourably, and promised that such terms of accommodation as he could consent to, should be transmitted to their master." Soon after this, accordingly, the Scottish envoys arrived, and their proposals were so artfully moderate, that Haco abandoned all thoughts of hostilities, and appeared certain that an accommodation would take place. Alexander only stipulated that the islands of Arran, Bute, and the Cumrays, should continue in possession of the Scottish crown; he appeared willing to abandon all claim to the Hebrides, and the pacification seemed every day to be on the point of being finally concluded, when indications of a change in the weather began to be observed, and on some petty article, the Scottish envoys suddenly and abruptly broke off the negotiation. The Norwegian monarch now sailed past the little islands called the Cumrays, bringing his fleet into the sound now called Fairlie Road, lying

between these islands and the coast of Ayrshire, which by this movement he threatened with a descent; yet even after this, trusting to the truce which had not yet expired, the Norwegians sent a bishop and a baron, who were received by some Scottish knights and monks, but the negotiation ended, as usual, in nothing decisive; and on their return, the Norwegian officers earnestly advised the king to pronounce the truce at an end, and to give orders for immediate hostilities, as the fleet had run short of provisions, and the Scots were beginning to assemble in formidable numbers upon the shore.

Haco was now in a perilous dilemma. The negotiations which had been so artfully protracted, had given the Scots time to assemble their force, and any attempt at a landing he knew would be disputed; the symptoms of the autumnal storms were becoming daily more threatening, and he was too old a navigator not to be aware of the extreme danger of abiding their fury where he now was, whilst, at the same time, his honour and reputation would be ruined by a precipitate retreat. In these circumstances, and evidently acting under the influence of the chivalrous principles of the times, he sent Kolbein Rich, one of his captains, with a last message to the Scottish king. It was worded in the brief and vigorous expressions of a cartel or challenge, and proposed that the two sovereigns should meet, with all their forces, to treat regarding a peace, which, if it took place, it was well, but if it should turn out otherwise, then, said Kolbein Rich, "Haco, my master, throws down his gage, and demands

battle between himself and the King of Scotland, with their whole armies; and let him conquer to whom God pleases to give the victory!" Although Alexander, according to the testimony of his enemies, showed no unwillingness to fight, yet he was too well aware of the great advantages which were now within his reach, to abandon them, by so absurd a procedure as that which was now proposed to him; and the ambassador returned with a reply as unsatisfactory as any which had preceded it.

The measure of Haco's patience was now expended, or rather he had reached the utmost limits to which he could push his desire of a pacification. Perceiving that he had been the dupe of an artful negotiator, in deep indignation he at once declared the truce at an end, and sent Magnus, King of Man, with a squadron of sixty ships, into Loch Long. Along with Magnus were most of the vassal chiefs of the Hebrides, who had joined Haco. Prince Dugal was there, with his brother Allan, grandsons of Reginald King of the Isles; and it is probable that the most considerable part of this force consisted of the soldiers of Man and the Isles, while the King of Norway retained the greater part of his own ships and soldiers with himself. A scene of dreadful havoc and slaughter now commenced, and, in proportion to the delay of piratic vengeance, its fury, when once let loose, was more deep and pitiless.* Having run their vessels to the head of Loch

* Snorro, Historia Regum Norvegicorum, vol. v. p. 384.

Long, the Norsemen unshipped their boats, and, by main strength, dragged them across the narrow neck of land which separates Loch Long from Loch Lomond. This beautiful lake, from its inland situation, had been deemed little exposed to attack; and the numerous islands with which it is studded, were then full of inhabitants, who, not anticipating the measure which the persevering enterprise of these northern pirates enabled them to carry into execution, had taken refuge, with their most valuable effects, in a retreat which they esteemed perfectly secure; but, to their terror and dismay, the flotilla of the Norsemen attacked them before they could adopt any plan of fortification and defence. Multitudes of the unhappy peasantry were put to the sword, the islands wasted with fire, and the country around the lake, then a wealthy and populous district, studded with villages, and fertile in agricultural produce, was reduced in a few days to an arid smoking desert, strewed with the dead bodies of its inhabitants, covered with the smouldering fires of plundered granges, and the blackened ruins of cottages and castles. From Loch Lomond, one of the Hebridean Norsemen, Allan, the brother of King Dugal, at the head of a large force, penetrated into the heart of Dunbarton and Stirlingshire, slaying multitudes of the inhabitants, carrying off every thing which was worth the labour of transport, destroying by fire what they could not remove, and driving before them, to their ships, many hundred head of cattle. But this was the last triumph of the Norwegians; their measure of success was now full, and the event which had been

so eagerly anticipated by the sagacious calculations of their enemy, at last occurred.

Scarcely had they got time to regain their vessels in Loch Long, when the weather suddenly changed, and their fleet was attacked by a hurricane, which drove the ships from their moorings, and reduced ten of them to perfect wrecks. This disaster, and the damage done to the remainder of the squadron, rendered it impossible for the ships immediately to rejoin their companions, or to carry off their accumulated plunder; and, in the meantime, still more serious distresses had fallen upon the king himself, and that division of the fleet which remained under his command. It was now the 29th of September, or Michaelmas-day, which this year fell on a Saturday. During the night, and throughout Sunday, the weather had been threatening, and the veteran experience of the Norsemen anticipated a gale; but, though prepared for danger, they little foresaw the extent of the calamities which awaited them. On Monday night a tempest came on, accompanied with hailstones and torrents of rain, which was so sudden and furious, that, trained as the Norwegians were to the sea, and, from their infancy, children of the storm, they refused to regard it as a natural event, and ascribed it to the incantations of the Scottish witches. Not a star was to be seen in the heavens, which were black with thunder-clouds, and amid the roaring of the wind, it was impossible for the voices of the seamen to be heard; the waves, which washed in deluges over the decks, extinguished the lights by which the vessels were worked, and as the hurricane grew

every moment more tremendous in its strength, the scene which took place became appalling. Vessels, driven from their anchors, were dashed against the shore, or ran foul of each other, and were totally wrecked; cries of distress, from those who were still making vain attempts to save their ships, mingled with the shrieks of drowning men; and, as the wind was from the south-west, making the coast of Ayrshire a lee shore to the fleet in the sound, it was evident that, had it continued for any great length of time, not a vessel could have escaped. In the midst of this confusion and dismay, a loud cry was heard from the king's ship, and a watchman on deck shouted, that a transport was drifting against them. Before assistance could be given, her beak was carried away, and the anchor of the transport, as she drove past, getting entangled in the cordage of the other, the royal vessel began to drag her anchors, and, had not the cable of the transport been suddenly and opportunely cut, would have been carried out to sea. Surrounded by this complicated distress, the king took to his long-boat, and carrying with him his chaplains and the ministers of religion, landed on the islands of the Cumrays, and, amid the howling of the storm and the war of elements, ordered mass to be sung. But Haco's idea that the powers of incantation might be counteracted by the holy services of the church, was not followed with success, for morning only brought an accession of horrors. The tempest continued with such increasing fury, that the fleet was forced up the channel, and although the king's ship was secured by eight anchors, she drove far into the sound

before they took hold. The sea was now covered with the fragments of wrecks; many of the vessels which remained cut away their masts, and throwing every thing overboard, committed themselves to the will of the tempest. Others, with all on board, were swamped, and went to the bottom; and multitudes, with their crews, were driven ashore, where they endeavoured to intrench themselves for the defence of their stranded ships. During the continuance of the storm, the heights above the coast had been covered by a multitude of armed peasants, who watched every motion of the Norwegian fleet, and held themselves in readiness to attack them whenever an opportunity offered. Accordingly, as soon as the vessels were driven ashore, the Scots rushed down from the high ground, and a conflict took place which was maintained with doubtful advantage, till Haco succeeded in landing some boats with reinforcements, and the Scots, towards evening, retired. Both parties, however, were busy during the night—Haco, in making arrangements for the landing of a formidable reinforcement, and the Scots, in plundering the stranded vessels, and urging the speedy advance of the main body of their army. When morning broke, and the extreme violence of the tempest had somewhat abated, the king succeeded in conducting on shore a large force. Haco's object evidently was to tow off and save the stranded vessels, which, in the wreck of so many of his finest ships, were now become too important to be abandoned. On arriving on shore, the king accordingly attacked the force of armed peasants, and having driven them from the

heights, drew up his soldiers on the ground which had been occupied by the enemy, so as to cover his operations on the beach.

When Haco was thus employed, and had succeeded, after great efforts, in disengaging the ships, the sun rose, and as his level rays caught the surrounding hills, a striking sight presented itself. The advanced division of the Scottish army, which had lain the night preceding at Camphill, was discovered upon its march, in the direction of the road which at the present day leads from Kilbirnie. The grey mists of the morning still enveloped the columns, and from the midst of the clouds there issued, at intervals, flashes of fire, and coruscations of intense brightness, when the sun's rays glanced upon the armour; but as their approach was rapid, the Norwegians could soon discern the numbers and equipment of their enemies, the pennons and banners waving above their wood of spears, and the knights and leaders marshalling the line, and blazing in complete steel, which covered both men and horse. On the approach of the Scottish army, it was discovered that it was led by the young king in person, assisted by the high steward of Scotland.* According to the Norwegian Chronicle, it consisted of fifteen hundred knights, many of whom were mounted on Spanish steeds, in complete armour, and on those horses which were not completely barbed—that is, armed entirely in mail—there were at least steel frontlets and breastplates; besides which, there was a numerous body of foot soldiers, well accoutred, and

* Wynton, vol. i. p. 387.

furnished for the most part with bows and arrows. Against this force, Haco had to oppose very inferior numbers, and, in the difficulties with which he was surrounded, it did honour to his courage and ability that he could make head at all. The weather was still so bad, the wind so high, and the surf so tremendous, that it was almost impossible for any boat to live in it, and it was at the extreme peril of their lives that a landing had already been effected ; besides this, the labour of the greater part of the force which remained on board the vessels that had escaped being wrecked, was imperiously required in the task of repairing the damage, and making ready to carry home the king and the remnants of his army, if they survived the battle ; and it is evident, although the Chronicle attempts to conceal it, that the loss of lives, by wreck and by sickness, had been prodigiously great. If, to a fleet consisting of a hundred and sixty ships, we allow the common crew which the vessels of this period generally contained, and which was eighty men, the Norwegian army, when it arrived in the Isles, must have been at least twelve thousand eight hundred men strong. The probability, however, is, that this calculation is much under the truth ; and it may give us some idea of the extent of the loss sustained in the storm, when we find that, on the approach of the Scottish army, the utmost numbers of the Norwegians whom Haco commanded, did not exceed nine hundred, or at the highest, a thousand men. Of these, an advanced body, commanded by an officer named Ogmund Krœdikantz, occupied the rising ground above

the shore, whilst the king himself, with Andrew Nicolson, Ronald Urka, Andrew Pott, and others of his best captains, were drawn up nearer the beach.

The Scottish army now rapidly advanced, and the outprickers, or light troops, began to skirmish with the enemy on the hill, upon which the Norwegians entreated the king to row back to his fleet, and, if practicable, to send them reinforcements. Haco at first obstinately insisted on remaining where he was, and sharing the danger with his soldiers, but as any accident befalling him at this moment might have brought utter ruin on the expedition, his captains compelled him to leave them, and, having reimbarked in his barge, he rejoined his fleet at the Cumrays. A furious attack was now made by the Scots upon the advanced body of the enemy, who occupied the heights; and although Ogmund at first sustained his position, the disparity in numbers was so great, that it became necessary to abandon the high ground, and fall back upon the main body. This retreat was at first managed successfully, as Ogmund was supported by Andrew Nicolson; but as the Scots pressed on with the utmost fury, and showers of stones from the slings, along with darts and discharges of arrows, came thickly upon them, the advanced body were at last completely broken, and, taking to flight, rushed down the hill, carrying disorder and dismay into the little army drawn up upon the shore. The whole body of the Scottish cavalry now charged down the hill, and the Norwegians saw themselves on the point of being swept into the sea. A panic began to seize them,

and for a few moments, weakened by their disasters and watching, and disheartened by the inferiority of numbers, they forgot their national bravery. "Some," to use the honest words of the Chronicle, "leapt into the boats, and pushed from land; others sheltered themselves in the transport which had been driven ashore; and Lord Andrew Pott, in utter dismay, leapt over two boats into a third, and escaped from land."

In the midst of this dreadful confusion the sky again darkened, and on the sea, which still boiled and heaved with the effects of the former storms, another dreadful hurricane descended, so that many boats, overloaded with the heavy-armed soldiers who sprung into them and attempted to rejoin the fleet, were swamped, and went to the bottom. Under such accumulated disasters, it was hardly to be expected that any men could maintain a lengthened conflict; and although Andrew Nicolson and the brave Ogmund managed to keep the principal body of their little army pretty well together, they could not prevent it from being driven along the shore to the south, at a distance from their boats, and, according to the tradition of the neighbourhood, to a place called the Kepping Burn, a little below Kelburn. The Norsemen fought entirely on foot, and, according to a very common manœuvre of the infantry of those early times, when attacked by a superior force, formed themselves into a circle, with their spears obliquely inclined to the enemy. They were thus enabled for a while to retire slowly, resisting the fierce and repeated charges of the Scottish cavalry, while their leaders at times dashed

from the centre through the lines, and undauntedly attacking the Scottish knights in single combat, gave time for the main body to retire.

It was on one of these occasions that Sir Piers de Curry, one of the noblest of the Scottish knights, was slain, and the circumstances of his death are minutely and strikingly described in the contemporary Chronicle. Enraged that the repeated efforts of the cavalry were unable to penetrate the little phalanx of the Norsemen, which like a huge steel hedge-hog bristled and crept along the beach. Sir Piers rode round and round the circle, brandishing his spear, and trying to provoke an encounter. He wore a helmet inlaid with gold, and set with precious stones; his cuirass was equally rich, his sword hung in a belt studded with jewels, and the armour and trappings of his horse were not less ornamented. Although the feat was dangerous, and might have proved fatal to his soldiers, Andrew Nicolson, irritated at the insults offered by this young knight, attacked him with fury, and, parrying with his sword the spear-thrust aimed against him, struck Sir Piers as he passed in his career with his whole strength upon the thigh. The blow proved fatal, for the sword, having hit upon the joints of his cuisses, cut sheer into the saddle, and such was the strength with which it descended, that the limb was separated from the body, and " the renowned Wearer of the Belt," to use the words of Sturlas, fell dead below his horse. The conflict now became general round the body of the slain knight, for the Norwegians, invetorate in their habits of plunder, could not

resist the temptation of stripping him of his splendid armour; and the battle, thus renewed, raged for a while with the utmost fury. During all this time the storm continued with unabated violence, and King Haco, divided between his attempts to save the remainder of his fleet from absolute destruction, and his anxiety to send reinforcements to his little army on shore, endured the greatest distress and agony of mind. At last two of his officers, Ronald and Eilif of Naustadale, succeeded, at the peril of their lives, in landing a reinforcement through the surf; and the seasonable arrival of these fresh troops enabled the Norwegians to form anew, and not only to offer a more determined resistance, but to become the assailants in their turn. In this way the tide of battle seems to have been carried back from Kelburn towards a spot nearer Largs, still known in the country by the name of the Killing Craig. Here, after a great slaughter, the Scots were borne back by the determined bravery of their opponents, and Andrew Nicolson, with the rest of their leaders, seized the short interval of repose to retreat to their ships; but to reimbark was impossible, so long as the enemy in great strength occupied the heights. A last and desperate effort was therefore made to dispossess them;—although Ronald, who headed one of the new detachments, was repulsed to his ships, Eilif, having attacked the Scots in flank with determined resolution, succeeded in gaining the high ground; the night was now quickly closing upon the combatants; the Norsemen under cover of the darkness regained their boats, and pushing

out from shore, had the good fortune, notwithstanding the continuance of the tempest, to rejoin the fleet.

When morning broke, although the storm had abated, a dreadful scene presented itself. The sea, still turbid and boiling with the agitation of the tempest, was covered with the shattered remnants of the vessels which had been beaten to pieces—planks, broken masts, cordage, victualling casks, floating shreds of wearing apparel, and all the melancholy accompaniments of a wreck; whilst the shore was thickly strewed with the bodies of the dead and dying. These were altogether Norwegians, for the Scots, during the night, had carried their slain and wounded into the neighbouring woods; and the Norse Chronicle complains that it was impossible to ascertain the numbers of the enemy which had fallen. A truce now appears to have been granted to Haco, who landed under its protection, and buried his dead. Amongst the slain were some of his bravest captains, including many of the officers of his household; and having employed the interval in erecting, over the barrows in which they were interred, those rude memorials which still mark the spot where the conflict took place,* the king weighed anchor, and brought his

* The field of battle is still shown to the traveller. It is an extensive plain to the south of the village of Largs, upon which there yet remain the cairns of stones raised over the bodies of the slain. In the centre of this field stood a large granite pillar, ten feet high, which is now fallen down. Mr Wilson of Hailey, in 1772, having occasion for stones to enclose part of his grounds, opened a small

ships close under the Cumrays. His shattered fleet was now joined by the remnant of the squadron which he had sent up Loch Long, and which, although the circumstance is not mentioned by the Norse Chronicler, had probably suffered severely in the same storm.

At this crisis, if the Scottish monarch had possessed a fleet, there can be little doubt that the destruction of the whole of Haco's navy might have been completed; but, in the total want of ships, Alexander was compelled to remain on shore, and, on the 12th of October, the Norwegian monarch sailed from the Cumrays towards Arran. In Lamlash Bay he was met by the commissioners he had sent to the Irish Ostmen, who, in reply to the communication of his ambassadors, promised to support his army, and anxiously besought his assistance against the English; but although Haco, eager to wipe off the disgrace, or to banish the memory of his recent disasters, was extremely desirous to sail for Ireland, the whole army, with one voice, opposed him, and in deep mortification he was obliged to give up the expedition. Once more weighing anchor, therefore, he doubled the Mull of Cantyre, and directed his homeward course through the Western Isles by Isla, Mull, Sky, and the Lewis.

hill called Margaret's Law, supposed to be natural, but which was found to be a collection of stones, amounting to upwards of five hundred cart-loads; in the centre of it were discovered five stone coffins, two of which contained five skulls each, with other human bones, and several earthen urns. On the same field Danish axes have been frequently dug up. Stat. Account, vol. xvii. p. 516.

But he experienced much distress: the fleet had run short of provisions, the spirits of the soldiers and mariners were broken by disappointment and over-fatigue, and his return as a baffled invader presented a striking contrast to his arrival a few months before, when every succeeding day brought the island princes as the willing vassals of his flag; and his proud armament of a hundred and sixty ships, unconquered and unbroken, held their way through the labyrinth of the western archipelago. His own soldiers and officers had little respect for his orders; his boat crews, when he attempted to levy contributions, were attacked and cut off; his allies, the pirate chiefs, anticipating the near vengeance of the Scottish monarch, hastily left him, to fortify themselves in their homes; and in passing the Pentland Frith he was attacked by a storm, in which one of his ships went to the bottom. This, however, was his last disaster, and on the 29th of October he arrived in the Orkneys.

From this, most of his ships sailed to Norway. "Some," according to the simple and honest expressions of the Chronicle, "went with the king's permission, but others took leave for themselves." Haco was at first eager to accompany them, but on his arrival in Orkney he was seized with severe sickness. For many months his mind had been a prey to constant watchfulness and anxiety. He had endured, besides, extreme bodily fatigue, and after a few days it became evident that his constitution was rapidly sinking under a mortal disease. Sensible that his end was approaching, he with great calmness made the arrangements ne-

cessary for the succession of his son, Prince Magnus, whom he solemnly declared to be his only heir. He appointed the pay to be distributed to the troops, gave directions regarding the legacies to be given to his officers and councillors, and dictated certain letters of instruction to his son, upon the government of the kingdom. The Bible and some Latin authors were then read to him; but as his attention became fatigued, the aged Norse warrior commanded the chronicles of his ancestors, the pirate kings, to be recited aloud. Finding his disorder increase, he summoned the ministers of the church, and, surrounded by his dearest friends and courtiers, received extreme unction. He then affectionately kissed them, bidding them farewell, and on Saturday, the 15th of December, "at midnight," to use the words of the Norse Chronicle, "Almighty God called King Haco out of this mortal life."

Such was the conclusion of this celebrated expedition, which commenced with high hopes and vaunted expectations, exciting terror even in England,* and threatening to establish within Scotland the dominion of a foreign crown, and to crush for ever her hopes of recovering the possession of the northern counties and the Western Islands. The secondary cause of its failure is to be found in the able policy of the Scottish sovereign as a successful negotiator, and the long and repeated delays of the King of Norway, who too confidently anticipated that the presence of so mighty an armament on the Scottish coast would

* Fœdera Angliæ, vol. i. p. 772.

compel his enemy to agree to any terms which he proposed. The real causes of the disaster were, as we are informed by the Chronicle of Melros, reverentially acknowledged by Haco himself before his death. "The arm of God, and not the strength of man," said he, "hath repulsed me; which hath wrecked my ships and sent death amongst my soldiers."*

On the 21st January, 1264, the Scottish queen was delivered at Jedburgh of a son, who was named Alexander, after his father; and on the same day in which the news of this joyful event were brought to the sovereign, he received accounts of the death of his powerful enemy, the King of Norway. Without delay, he now proceeded to secure the important advantages which the late successes had placed within his reach. As soon as the season of the year permitted, the king assembled his army, and having compelled the various lords and chiefs, whose territories were adjoining to the sea, to collect their ships, he determined to invade the kingdom of Man, as the most formidable possession of the Crown of Norway, and to reduce it under his dominion. When engaged in these preparations, a suppliant embassy arrived from this island prince, imploring his forgiveness, and requesting a personal interview. Alexander accordingly transmitted to him a safe conduct; but continued his march, and proceeded towards the sea-coast. At Dumfries, however, he was met by King Magnus, who, with every expression of penitence, became the vassal

* Chron. Melros, p. 225.

of the Crown of Scotland, delivering his kingdom into the hands of Alexander as his Lord Paramount, and receiving from him the investiture, under the tenure of furnishing to his superior, whenever it was required, ten war galleys, five with twenty-four, and five with twelve oars.*

The king next dispatched a large force under the command of the Earl of Buchan, the Earl of Mar, and Sir Alan Durward, against the chiefs of the Western Isles, who, during the late invasion, had remained faithful to Norway. A severe example of royal vengeance appears to have been inflicted. The traitors, who, to use the expressions of Fordun, had invited the King of Norway into Scotland, were executed, others were driven into banishment, their principalities were cruelly ravaged, and forfeited to the crown, and the expedition returned from the Isles with a great booty. These, however, were only minor consequences resulting from the defeat of Haco. The richer fruits of the victory were reserved for a treaty, which took place in the following year; by which, after a protracted negotiation with Magnus, that monarch agreed to renounce all claim over the Western Isles and the kingdom of Man, and to cede them in perpetuity to the Crown of Scotland. For this renunciation, Alexander consented to pay the sum of four thousand merks, equal to about forty thousand pounds of our present money, together with an annual payment of a hundred merks, or one thousand pounds.

* Ayloffe, Calendar of Ancient Charters, p. 328. Fordun a Goodal, vol. ii. p. 101.

The treaty, which was concluded at Perth, contained provisions for the security and protection of the persons, vessels, or cargoes of the vessels of either kingdom, which might be wrecked on the coasts of the other; and it gave to the inhabitants of the Hebrides the express permission either to retire in peace from the islands with their goods, or to remain, and be from thenceforth governed by Scottish laws. It appears, from an ancient historian, that some of the king's councillors maintained the immemorial possession of the Isles by the Scots long before the days of Magnus Barefoot, and were dissatisfied with the treaty; yet certainly on very insufficient grounds, for the earliest gleams of authentic history discover the Norwegian monarchs as the proprietors of the western archipelago; and subsequent events have amply proved the wisdom of a treaty, which cut off for ever from a foreign power, and united to the Scottish crown, a portion of territory essentially requisite to establish the integrity and the security of its dominions. It ought to be mentioned, that the Orkney and Shetland Isles still remained the property of the sovereigns of Norway.

Strengthened and improved by this steady attention to the cares of government, the character of the king became gradually more vigorous, and his talents in the management of state affairs more conspicuous. Beloved and admired by his own subjects, he was respected by foreign powers; and in his relations with England, whilst he maintained with uniform firmness the independence of his kingdom, he was ever ready to act a friend-

ly part in the difficulties which then disturbed her government. This disposition he strikingly evinced, when the powerful Earl of Leicester, Simon de Montfort, rose in rebellion against the crown. " At this period," says Fordun, " the King of Scotland, of his own voluntary liberality, sent, to join the army of his father-in-law Henry, and his relation Prince Edward, three soldiers out of every hide of land; but as soon as it was certain that Simon and his followers were discomfited, the King of England liberally rewarded the Scots, and remitted them back to their own country. The reader," continues the ancient historian, " will observe, that the portion of land which is called a hide, is that for the culture of which the labour of one plough is annually required."*

It resulted from this wise policy of Alexander, that the best understanding was maintained between the two kingdoms, and that much friendly intercourse took place. After the siege of Alnwick, when Prince Edward, afterwards Edward I., had made himself master of his enemy and rebel, John de Vesci, and dispatched him in chains to London, he recreated himself from the toils of war at Roxburgh, where he was met, and entertained, by the King of Scotland, his sister Queen Margaret, and almost the whole body of the Scottish nobility. On another occasion, when Alexander kept the festival of his birthday at Berwick, and with great solemnity and festive pomp conferred the honour of knighthood upon a son of the powerful family of Comyn, Prince Ed-

* Fordun, vol. ii. p. 103.

mund, the youngest son of Henry, with a suite of the knights and servants of his household, was one of the birthday guests; and a few years after, the Scottish King himself, accompanied by his queen, and a select body of his nobles, met his father-in-law, Henry, at York, for the purpose of offering him his advice and condolence upon the misfortunes with which he had been visited, and the distracted state of his dominions. The condition of England at this period offered a striking contrast to the prosperous and tranquil state of the sister country. The powerful and dangerous rebellion of Simon de Montfort had indeed been put down, but the executions of the rebel lords, and the confiscations of their great estates, had thrown loose and masterless such multitudes of their vassals and retainers, that the country swarmed with broken men, who betook themselves to plunder and robbing as a profession; and, living in numerous and formidable bands within the woods and forests, attacked the peaceful traveller, and set all law at defiance.* The vicinity of such freebooters upon the Borders and marches, must have been alarming to Scotland; but the united efforts of the king and his nobility prevented the dangerous example from spreading within the kingdom, and, as far as was compatible with the unlicensed habits of the feudal governments, the equal administration of the laws ensured the security of property, and encouraged the progress of improvement.

* Fordun, vol. ii. p. 104.

Soon after this, Alexander found himself engaged in a contest with an adversary scarcely less formidable than Haco, and whose attack, if it was not so open and alarming, was at once more delicate in its management, and far more subtile and dangerous, than that of the Norwegian invader. In those remote times, it is well known that the authority which was claimed by the Roman See, not only over the spiritual liberties, but over the temporal concerns of the various kingdoms of Europe, was as extensive as it was vexatious and unwarrantable. By means of their legates, their envoys, and their numerous inferior emissaries, the Holy Fathers became acquainted with the most secret concerns of the state; they interfered with every case which, by the most remote analogy, could be brought within the verge of the ecclesiastical code; and they nominated to vacant bishoprics and inferior benefices foreigners and strangers, who had no residence in the country from which they drew immense sums of money. Upon any great emergency, such as the mission of a legate, or the preaching of a crusade, they levied very heavy and oppressive taxes upon the whole lands in the kingdom; and if their commands for these pecuniary exactions did not meet with unscrupulous obedience, they were ever ready to fulminate against the head of the impious recusant the thunders of ecclesiastical wrath, and to exclude himself and his subjects from the services of the church, and the sacraments of religion.

A short time previous to the Norwegian invasion, the see of Glasgow had become vacant. The

king having nominated to the mitre Nicholas de Moffat, Archdeacon of Teviotdale, he repaired to Rome to receive consecration; but Alexander IV., then supreme pontiff, having found the Scottish bishop elect somewhat scrupulous in advancing money, annulled the royal nomination, and consecrated his own chaplain, John de Cheyham. The king, in the utmost indignation at this interference with one of the highest branches of his prerogative, refused to receive him; and the pope, in return, directed against him and his kingdom certain angry mandates, intended to be the precursors of more determined wrath. By the interference, however, of Henry III., a settlement, apparently amicable, was effected, and the papal bishop was permitted to enter Scotland. His life, however, was miserable; he found himself the object of secret enmity and unceasing persecution, and retired to Rome, where he soon after died, leaving his uneasy dignity to Moffat, the favourite of the king.

A few years after this, Ottobon de Fieschi was sent as papal legate into England, for the purpose of composing the differences between Henry III. and his barons; and, actuated by that ambitious principle of extending the authority, and replenishing the coffers, of his master, which at this period invariably animated the embassies of the Holy See, he addressed an authoritative letter to the Scottish bishops, requiring them to levy a tax of six merks upon every cathedral, and four merks upon every parish church, to defray the expenses of his visitation. Against this extortion, the king, having summoned a council of his clergy,

positively interposed his interdict, and appealed to the Apostolic See, whilst his clergy, grateful for this opposition, contributed the sum of two thousand merks to defray the expenses of carrying the cause to Rome.* Irritated at this unexpected repulse, the legate now demanded admittance into Scotland; but Alexander requested that his commission should be transmitted to him, and having examined it, he, with the concurrence and advice of his clergy, peremptorily denied permission to the papal envoy to set his foot within the kingdom. Fieschi, in deep indignation, summoned the body of the Scottish clergy to attend him, at whatever place in England he should think fit to hold his council, whilst he directed them, by his mandate, to elect, as members of such council, and representatives for the whole body of the Scottish clergy, either two abbots, or two priors. To this order the Scottish clergy gave an obedience which was little acceptable to Rome. They sent to the council two bishops and two abbots, but they came not to co-operate with, but to watch over, their deliberations; and when the legate proceeded to enact some statutes, or canons, which they considered injurious to the liberties of Scottish subjects, the deputies rose in their place, and formally declared that they would not obey them.

It was during the same year in which this spi-

* According to Lord Lyttelton, ten pounds of modern money may be allowed for every merk of ancient. This, however, means simply, that in one merk of ancient money, there was as much silver as in ten pounds of modern.

rited conduct took place, that the brave and unfortunate Lewis IX. of France, undertook his crusade, in which he was joined by the Princes Edward and Edmund, sons of Henry III., and a large cavalcade of English knights and nobles. To defray the expenses of this armament, Pope Clement, by the advice of his legate, and at the instance of the English king, directed a mandate to the clergy of Scotland, by which he commanded them to levy a tenth of their benefices, and pay the accumulated sum to the King of England, as an aid for the intended crusade. To this request the Scottish monarch and his clergy sent an immediate and unanimous refusal, observing, that they were themselves at that moment engaged in fitting out a force against the Infidels, proportionate to the strength and resources of the kingdom. Nor was this a vain excuse; for two barons of high rank, David de Hastings, Earl of Athole, and Sir Adam de Kilconquhar, Earl of Carrick, along with a numerous body of knights and men-at-arms, embarked in the fatal expedition, and perished, with a great proportion of their followers; the first dying at Carthage, of a fever caught before the walls of Tunis; and the Earl of Carrick, in the siege of Acre, in Palestine.* The grant of this tenth, however, led to very important consequences. The King of England, confiding in the papal authority, attempted to levy the tax upon the benefices in Scotland. The clergy instantly entered their

* Fordun a Goodal, vol. ii. pp. 109, 111. Chron. Melros, p. 242.

appeal to Rome; and, not contented with this, without waiting for the permission of the Holy See, but relying upon the authority of a bull granted by Honorius III. in 1225, they assembled a provincial council at Perth, in which, under the authority of one of their own bishops, who presided, they enacted their own canons, appointed the council to be assembled annually, and ordained that, out of the body of their prelates, one should preside by rotation, under the title of Conservator of the Statutes of the Scottish Church. "Bold measures," observes the author of the Annals of Scotland, "admirably calculated for securing the independency of the Church of Scotland, but deeply fatal to the prerogative of the Roman See."

Soon after this, the death of Henry III. opened the succession to the crown of England to his son Edward I., distinguished, in the united characters of a conqueror and legislator, as perhaps the very ablest of the long line of English princes. His near connexion with Alexander, who had married his sister, rendered his accession to the throne a subject of congratulation to this generous-minded monarch. At this period, the King of Scotland was possessed of various estates and tenements in England, which he held of the king of that country, as his lord paramount; and, anxious to grace the festival of Edward's coronation, and to pay his homage upon this joyful occasion, he, along with his queen, and a brilliant assemblage of his barons and nobles, repaired to London, and was present at the

ceremony. "As the king sat at dinner," says Knighton, "Alexander, the King of Scotland, rode in to do him honour at the head of a hundred knights, very beautiful to behold, who were mounted on excellent horses; and after they had vaulted from their saddles, they threw the reins upon their necks, and allowed them to gallop where they chose; so that any one of the crowd who caught them, might claim them as their property. And afterwards," continues the same author, "Edmund, Earl of Cornwall, the king's brother, along with the Earls of Gloucester, Pembroke, and Warren, each having in their suite a body of a hundred knights, splendidly armed, and in the livery of their lord, came capricoling into the hall, and having descended from horseback, they and their attendants, in like manner, let loose their horses amidst the crowd, to be appropriated by any who got hold of them."* Upon this occasion, the English king, when Alexander came forward to perform his homage, made a bold attempt to revive the obsolete and unfounded claim which many years before had been started by his father, Henry III., at York. The design, however, was for the present defeated; for although Edward went through the ceremony of reserving his claim as to the homage for the kingdom of Scotland, Alexander, by the mouth of Robert, Earl of Carrick, took his oath of fealty, in terms clearly and minutely restricted to the lands and tenements which he held in England; "and Ed-

* Knighton, Col. 2461. Leland, Collectan. vol. i. part ii. p. 471.

ward was content to accept the oath in the manner in which it was offered."*

On his return to his kingdom, the Scottish monarch began to look around him for alliances for his children. His eldest daughter, Margaret, was in her twenty-first year, and besides her he had now two sons; Alexander, Prince of Scotland, in his nineteenth year, and David, a boy. A matrimonial negotiation was, accordingly, opened with Norway, in whose youthful sovereign, Eric, he found a husband for the Princess Margaret. This was an able and politic measure; for although the Western Islands were now a part of the Scottish kingdom, the allegiance of their chiefs was exceedingly precarious, and the matrimonial alliance between the Scottish princess and the sovereign to whose hereditary throne they so long owed their fealty, had a strong and direct tendency to confirm their attachment to their new master. Some of the provisions in the marriage contract are interesting, as reflecting a strong light upon the state of both countries. The portion stipulated to be paid along with the young Queen was the sum of fourteen thousand merks, equivalent to a hundred and forty thousand pounds of our modern money; she was to be crowned Queen of Norway on the day of her marriage, and to receive on the same day, from the hands of her husband, a dowery of fourteen thousand merks, with an estate suitable to her rank. So soon as she had disembarked and trod upon the Norwegian shore, a castle and manor were to be prepa-

* Rymer's Fœdera, vol. ii. p. 126.

red for her, in which she and her personal suite should reside, with all due honour and attendance, till the day of her nuptials; and all this was to be provided at the expense of the Norwegian government. Her children, in the event of her father's dying without children, or grand-children born of his son's marriage, were to succeed to the Scottish throne: and whilst Eric, on the one hand, in case of failure to fulfil the conditions of the contract, consented to forfeit to the Scottish monarch his territory of Orkney, Alexander agreed, upon the other, to deliver over to Norway his Island of Man, as the price of his broken faith, should he draw back from any of the obligations which he had so solemnly incurred. In one part of the same contract, the father of the bride stipulates, that he may, if he chooses, give one half of her portion in lands, so that the annual rent be one hundred merks for every thousand merks which is retained—a curious clause, which shows us that, in Scotland, at this period, (A. D. 1282,) the fair price of land was estimated at ten years' purchase.*

In the year succeeding this union with the King of Norway, Alexander, the Prince of Scotland, married Margaret, the daughter of the Earl of Flanders, at Roxburgh, on the 12th of November; an alliance as prudently and wisely chosen as the former, if we estimate its probable effect upon the trade and commercial interests of the country. The jointure stipulated in the marriage contract is fifteen hundred merks, of which, one

* Fordun, vol. ii. p. 124.

thousand three hundred were to be paid out of the customs of Berwick, and two hundred from Linlithgow; and the nuptial rejoicings were prolonged for fifteen days, with a great concourse of foreign knights from Flanders, and a noble attendance of bishops, abbots, earls, and barons.*

Having strengthened his family by such alliances, Alexander devoted himself, with unremitting attention, to the cares of government. The prevention and punishment of crime, and the administration of impartial justice throughout the kingdom, were, in those remote and troubled times, the most important duties of a sovereign. Under the feudal governments, the king was not only the leader of his armies in war, the fountain of all honour and nobility, but the actual supreme judge of his people, who, by his progresses through the kingdom, was bound, as far as it was possible, personally to watch over the enunciation and execution of the law, and where he found it either ignorantly or dishonestly interpreted, to give full and immediate redress. That Alexander was eminently qualified for this great charge, and executed it with the utmost success and fidelity, the perpetual references which we meet with in the calamitous period which succeeded his death, to his laws and ordinances, very satisfactorily demonstrate. But this is not left to inference and conjecture. "It was his custom," says Fordun, "that he might put down all violence and disorder, to make an annual progress through the kingdom, accompanied by a select but powerful

* Fœdera Angliæ, vol. ii. p. 1080.

body of his knights and nobles. In this manner he took up a temporary residence in each quarter of his dominions, having along with him his great justitiar, so that no complaint which was then made should be overlooked, but justice promptly and impartially administered to all. Wherever it pleased the king to ride upon such progresses, word was previously sent to the sheriff of the shire to which he directed his course, that he should be ready to meet him, according to ancient usage, upon the borders of his county, along with the whole military force of the shire; and having accompanied him in this manner at their own charges as far as the borders of another county, he was there in like manner received and welcomed by another sheriff, and with him another military force. He was thus accompanied through the kingdom from county to county, so that the monarch, in the security of their loyal attachment, rejoiced in the midst of his people, and the people in all quarters took delight in the presence of their king." It was the consequence of such anxious labours, "that," to use the words of the same historian, "during all the days of the life of this king, the ministers of religion were held in reverence, vice was eschewed, fraud unknown, violence put down, whilst virtue raised her head, truth was in esteem, and justice reigned throughout the land."* If it is remembered into how many parts the delegated jurisdiction of the sovereign was then divided: If we recollect that not only the sheriffs

* Fordun a Goodal, vol. ii. p. 129.

in every county, but every great feudal baron, had the power of administering justice to his vassals in his own court; that the magistrates in royal burghs enjoyed the same privilege; that the chamberlain, (to whom was committed the determination of all commercial and financial causes,) and the great as well as the local justitiars, had the privilege of appointing deputies, who held courts, and tried the various causes coming within their jurisdiction—the absolute necessity of a jealous and constant superintendence over so complicated a judicial machinery will become obvious to every one.

Under the reign of this monarch, we do not find any express mention, or even any faint indication, of the existence of that great national council, known afterwards by the name of the Parliament. The most important affairs of state appear to have been regulated by the king, with the occasional assistance of a council of his bishops and nobles, denominated, in authentic and contemporary records, a Colloquium. Two solemn colloquies of this kind were held at Edinburgh in the year 1264, immediately after the defeat of the Norwegians; upon which occasion the king probably kept open table for the nobility whom he had summoned, as we find a consumption of twenty-seven cows, six calves, and fourscore sheep, charged by the sheriff of Edinburgh to the royal household.* Amidst the cares of government, two subjects appear to have

* Excerpt. e Rotulo Compot. Temp. Alex. III. Chamberlain Accounts, vol. i. p. 52.

especially occupied the attention of this sovereign—the agriculture and the commerce of his kingdom; and although our authentic information upon both is exceedingly scanty and imperfect, there are yet a few gleanings to be gathered from our ancient historians, and from contemporary records, which bring before us some striking pictures of the primitive manners of the times. Covered as the country then was with immense forests and extensive marshes, Alexander made an attempt, by a statutory enactment, to encourage the clearing of the woods, and the cultivation of the soil. "The king," says Fordun, "aware that idleness is the mother of mischief, did not permit any persons who were not bred to some art or mystery, to be idle; but by a statute, commanded that all such should dig, every day, seven square feet of earth." Wynton, one of the most valuable and authentic of our ancient historians, alluding to the same subject, has the following somewhat obscure passage:—

> "Yeoman, carle, or vassal knave
> That was of wealth an ox to have,
> He made them all to keep a plough,
> So that the realm had corn enow.
> And so arose from such command,
> That the oxgang measure was of land.
> The mightier and the wealthier peers,
> That herds of oxen had, and steers,
> Drove many ploughs—and hence appears,
> A ploughgate land, for aye synsyne,
> A certain measure was of kine.
> By virtue of the king's command,
> Abundant was in corn the land.
> The boll of oats brought never more
> Of Scottish coin than pennies four,

And in the market sold was then
The boll of beer for eight or ten;
A boll of wheat, sixteen was worth,
Or twenty in the time of dearth."*

But although the country is thus described, by a writer of great value and accuracy, to have been abundant in corn, and, when compared with its condition under former and later reigns, in a state of progressive agricultural improvement, still this is to be understood of the average prices; and the occurrence of a single bad season, or the devastations produced by storms and inundations, were apt to occasion very grievous distress, and a scarcity which sometimes amounted to a famine. Thus, in the year 1260, Fordun informs us that there was a severe dearth in Scotland. A rainy autumn had overwhelmed the

* Wynton's Cronykil, vol. i. p. 400.—These verses are slightly modernized from the ancient Scottish text. The English reader may be curious to see the original, as a specimen of the language of the country in the interval between 1420 and 1424.

"Yhwmen, pewere karl, or knawe
Yat wes of mycht an ox til hawe,
He gert that man hawe part in pluche,
Swa wes corne in his land enwche.
Swa then begowth, and eftyr lang
Of land wes mesure ane oxgang.
Mychty men that had ma
Oxyn, he gert in pluchys ga,
A pluch of land eftyr that
To nowmyr of oxyn mesur gat.
Be that vertu all hys land
Of corn he gert be abowndand.
A boll of atis pennys foure
Of Scottis mone past noucht owre;
A boll of bere for aucht or ten,
In comowne prys, sawld wes then;
For sextene a boll of qwhete,
Or fore twenty the derth wes grete."

crops; storms of thunder and lightning were awfully loud and frequent; labourers in the field, and the flocks upon the mountains, were struck dead, the woods and corns consumed in many places by the lightning; and the price of provisions so augmented, that the boll of flour sold for four shillings.* Again, in 1268, the year in which the Earl of Athole and his brother crusaders left the kingdom, to perish at Carthage and Acon, the spring was so wet, and the summer so cold and tempestuous, that it produced a great mortality amongst the stags, the roe-deer, the wild horses, and the sheep; while, only four years after, the famine, which had fallen with dreadful severity upon France and England, was felt with an almost equal pressure in Scotland, so that the flocks fell dead in the stall, the crops were ruined by tempestuous weather, and the poor perished for lack of food. Besides which, continues the historian, the country had been impoverished by the large sums of money carried out of the kingdom to Palestine and Rome, by foreigners and ecclesiastics, and no less by the sojourn of Lord Ingelram de Couci, who, along with his sister and nephew, came to visit the king,† and after a tour through the royal domains, returned home with a full purse.

But if agriculture was a subject of study and attention to this monarch, he was no less solicitous regarding another important branch of national wealth,—the commerce of the country. It is undoubtedly true, that in many of his com-

* Fordun a Goodal, vol. ii. p. 93. † Ibid. p. 115.

mercial regulations there is a wide aberration from those enlightened principles, which in later times have been found to be indissolubly connected with a flourishing and prosperous trade. He provided, for example, that no merchandise should be exported out of the kingdom, in consequence of the losses which had been incurred by pirates, by the carelessness and ignorance of pilots, by sudden hurricanes, and frivolous arrestments in foreign ports; and the ancient author to whom we owe our information, remarks, that it was found exceedingly difficult to enforce obedience to this enactment. In consequence, however, of this sudden stoppage of the accustomed exports, there was an immediate resort to Scotland of the ships of various foreign nations, laden with every kind of merchandise, which the masters of the vessels were anxious to exchange for the regular products of the country. These productions, which constituted the exports of the kingdom previous to this edict of the sovereign, were not very multifarious. They consisted chiefly of wool and woolfells, hides, skins of leather, and furs of wild animals, such as deer, roebuck, foxes, and martins. There seems also to have been a frequent foreign demand for cattle, horses, sheep, and dogs of the chase; but perhaps the most lucrative of the foreign exports, was the article of dried and salted fish, in preparing which, the Scottish fish-curers, especially those of Aberdeen, were considered very skilful by the English, as well as the inhabitants of the continent. One consequence of this short-sighted enactment of the monarch, in laying an embargo upon the re-

gular exports of his dominions, is too important to be passed over. A numerous body of the Lombard merchants, at that time the most wealthy and enlightened traders in the world, repaired to Scotland; and, under the sole condition of certain spiritual immunities, they proposed to the King to erect, within a certain period, various royal burghs or trading communities in different parts of the kingdom, particularly specifying the peninsular rock at the Queensferry, in Fife, and the little island near Cramond. The object of these enterprising foreigners, in this proposal, was evidently to make themselves masters of that valuable export trade which was put a stop to by the recent regulations; but the death of Alexander broke off the design, which, although contrary to the opinion of some of his council, had received the royal approval.*

Engaged in these kingly cares, Alexander yet found time for amusement and relaxation,—or rather, with a happy economy, he united amusement with business. From some fragments of the accounts of his great chamberlain which have been preserved, it appears to have been his practice to make regular tours or progresses through his different royal estates, and, taking up a temporary residence at their castles or palaces, to enjoy the pleasures of the chase with his nobles and barons, whilst he at the same time became acquainted with his people, and gave to the lowest of his subjects an opportunity of preferring their complaints, and receiving a speedy redress

* Fordun a Goodal, vol. ii. p. 73.

of their grievances. In this way, according to the primitive manners of the times, as the royal rents were commonly paid in kind, he consumed the produce of the soil upon the spot where it was raised, entertained his nobility in a style of rude but abundant hospitality, and on birthdays, royal christenings, or marriages, and other seasons of established and accredited rejoicing, the feastings, revellings, and maskings of the court of Alexander appear to have been carried on with as much brilliance, perseverance, and expense, as in the feudal festivities of any contemporary sovereign. "So abundant was the kingdom during his reign in all the necessaries of life," to use the words of an ancient historian, "so peaceful and joyous were his subjects, so flourishing in arts and commerce, so stocked with flocks and herds, so well supplied with money, and all different sorts of merchandise, that many travellers came from the east and west to study the civil polity of the country, to consider its power, and to admire the discretion and wisdom of the King."*

Under the wise and peaceful administration of such a monarch, the kingdom looked forward with confidence to a long and happy reign. The sovereign was in the prime of his manhood; his queen had already brought him three children, two of whom were married, and it was natural to anticipate the birth of many more supports to the royal house. But in the midst of this apparent security, a dark cloud of misfortune was gathering over Scotland; and Providence, as if to show

* Fordun a Goodal, vol. ii. p. 130.

the absolute weakness and shortsightedness of all human calculations, was preparing to change into lamentation and woe, this fair scene of earthly prosperity and happy anticipation. Soon after the return of the king from the coronation of Edward I., he was deprived by death of his queen; and some time previous to this, his youngest son David had been carried off in his ninth year. These were deep misfortunes; but more grievous trials were behind. In the course of the year 1283, the melancholy news arrived that the Queen of Norway was dead, leaving an only daughter, named Margaret—a name, since the days of Malcolm's sainted consort, very dear to the Scots; and before the same year was concluded, Alexander, the Prince of Scotland, was seized with a mortal sickness, and died at Lindores, in Fife, leaving no family. Thus, by a succession of calamities, as deep as they were rapid and unexpected, Alexander found himself a widower, and bereaved of all his children.*

His first and immediate care was, to settle the succession; for which purpose he assembled his nobility and principal barons at Scone on the 5th of February, about a week after the death of the Prince. A learned writer has denominated this assembly a Parliament; but the original record, which remains, contradicts this opinion, and proves that it was simply a meeting of the nobles, unaccompanied by the bishops, and unattended by any representatives of the burghs.† Upon this im-

* Fordun a Goodal, vol. ii. p. 124.

† Hailes's Annals, vol. i. p. 184. Fœdera Angliæ, vol. ii. p. 266.

portant occasion, Alexander de Comyn, Earl of Buchan, Constable and High Justitiar; Patrick, Earl of Dunbar; Malise, Earl of Strathern; Malcolm, Earl of Lennox; Robert Brus, Earl of Carrick; Donald, Earl of Mar, and a numerous body of the earls and barons of Scotland, solemnly declared, that, seeing it had pleased the Almighty God to deprive the king of all legitimate issue, they bound themselves and their heirs, in the event of there being neither sons nor daughters thereafter born to their sovereign lord Alexander, to acknowledge the illustrious maiden Margaret, grand-daughter to their monarch, and daughter of Eric, King of Norway, and Margaret his queen, their rightful Lady and Sovereign; and to receive her as the direct and lawful inheritrix of the kingdom of Scotland, the Island of Man, and the Western Isles, with the districts of Tynedale and Penrith, and the whole rights and liberties thereto belonging.

Having arranged these necessary and important preliminaries, the King dispatched an embassy to Norway, with an earnest request to Eric, that he would permit his infant grandchild, who was now the only remaining successor to his kingdom, to be conducted to Scotland, and educated amongst her own people. Misfortune and ill success, however, continued to wait upon every measure of the government. The infant, who was the heir apparent to Norway as well as to Scotland, was equally dear to the father as to the grandfather, and King Eric, with a justifiable anxiety, retained her in his own kingdom; while, some misunderstanding having arisen between

the Norwegian court and Alexander's envoys, they were compelled, notwithstanding the stormy and inclement season of the year, to re-embark for Scotland, and encountered a tempest, in which their vessel went down, and all on board perished.* One of the oldest and best of the Scottish historical ballads, "Sir Patrick Spens," seems to be founded on this calamitous mission. It describes, in simple but beautiful stanzas, the ladies of Scotland sitting with their fans in their hand, and their "gowd kaims in their hair," and looking over the wide ocean for the sails of their returning lords, whom they are destined never to behold again.

> "And lang lang may the maidens sit,
> Wi' their gowd kaims in their hair,
> A' waiting for their ain dear loves;
> For them they'll see nae mair!"

Some time after the occurrence of this sad event, the king, who was only in his forty-fifth year, at the entreaty of his prelates and his nobility, dispatched his chancellor, Charteris, along with three knights, Sir Patrick Graham, Sir William St Clair, and Sir John de Soulis, on a matrimonial embassy to France. Their commission was to select, from one of the noblest families in that country, a second consort for their sovereign; and they chose Ioleta, a daughter of the Count de

* Ayloffe's Calendar of Ancient Charters, p. 344.—Amongst the writings, De Maritagio Norwegiæ, there is, "Quoddam transcriptum de rebus inventis post Naufragium Nunciorum."—See also Leland's Coll., vol. i. p. 528.

Dreux, who was wedded to the king at Jedburgh, with great pomp and rejoicing, on the 5th of April, 1285. Her extreme beauty, the splendour of the suite of French nobility who accompanied her, and the generous wishes of the Scottish nobles to manifest their joy at the marriage of the king, and to efface all melancholy recollections from his mind, rendered these festivities unusually brilliant. Amid a numerous concourse of all that was lordly and beautiful in the land, Alexander and his queen presented gifts to the foreign barons, who came to grace the ceremony; and the feast, the dance, and the rude dramatic or pantomimic entertainments of these times, occupied many successive days. But the nuptial mirth was suddenly overclouded by a singular apparition. At night, when joy was at its height, when the floor was thronged with maskers, and the minstrels made the arched roof echo to their music, a spectre like Death suddenly glided in amongst the revellers, and approaching the beautiful Ioleta, invited her with a silent and fearful motion to join the dancers. All were horror-struck; a loud shriek from the queen announced the extremity of her terror, and falling into the arms of her husband, the music ceased, and the entertainment abruptly broke off, amid the sighs and tears of the queen's female attendants, and the indignant enquiries of the prince and his nobles. It was, indeed, soon discovered that the whole was only a well-acted piece of "mumming;" but a feeling of superstitious dread and dark presentiment had taken hold of the minds of the assembly, and the deathlike mask at Jedburgh

seems to have been universally considered as ominous of some deep national calamity.

Nor was this an unfounded foreboding, for the king did not survive his marriage for a single year, and his death was sudden and violent. Having gone to visit his queen, he returned on horseback with a small retinue of his nobles, and reached Inverkeithen in the evening. The night was dark, and as the road wound dangerously along some precipitous cliffs overhanging the sea, his courtiers earnestly intreated him to delay his journey till the morning; but he insisted on pressing forward towards Kinghorn, and his horse, making a false step, stumbled over a cliff, and, falling with its rider, killed him in an instant. The place where the accident happened is still pointed out in the tradition of the neighbourhood, by the name of "the King's Wudend," and a cross of stone was erected on the spot, which still existed in the reign of James II.* In Eng-

* In the northern part of the parish of Inverkeithen, as we are informed by the Reverend Mr Robertson, in his account of that district,† there is a stone set up about 10 feet high, 2½ broad, and one thick, commonly called the Standing Stone, upon which many rude figures seem to have been cut, which are much defaced by the weather and length of time. On the east side, however, the basso-relievo is more plain, and represents two armed men on horseback, the one behind the other. May it not be conjectured that this rude monument is the *crux lapidea*, or stone cross, mentioned by Fordun, as having been erected to commemorate the death of the king, and removed by some chance from its original site into the interior?

† Statistical Account of Scotland, vol. x. p. 511.

land, his death was considered, if we may believe Knighton, as a judgment from Heaven, for his having broken the holy season of Lent, by a visit to his queen. Such is the ridiculous blindness of superstition! In Scotland, however, the universal love and affection of his subjects repelled so injurious an imputation. "Let no one," says Fordun, reasoning upon the suddenness of his death, "presume to doubt as to the salvation of this king. He cannot die ill who hath lived well."*

In addition to the many great qualities which he possessed as a king, Alexander was beloved, and long affectionately remembered by his subjects for his private virtues. He was easy of access to the lowest suitor, unaffectedly devout and attentive to his religious exercises, affectionate and sweet-tempered in his family, and in his manners at court, in his reception of noble strangers or foreign ambassadors, there was a judicious combination of courtesy and dignity. His personal appearance—a matter not indifferent in estimating the popularity of a sovereign, even in the most enlightened times, but which is of infinite importance in a dark and warlike age—was much in his favour; for his height was commanding, his make athletic and powerful, and his countenance animated by an expression of open benevolence and kingly majesty, which inspired all who beheld him with a mingled feeling of awe and affection.† To the poorer classes—whose defenceless condition under the confusions and

* Fordun a Goodal, vol. ii. p. 128.
† Ibid. vol. ii. p. 129.

misgovernment of his minority, subjected them to perpetual oppression—his administration was a change from terror and distress, to security and peace. His inflexible lovè of justice, the rapidity and certainty of the punishment which overtook offenders—for it is said by an ancient historian, that he had only to issue his orders, and the traitor was hunted down, and brought with a rope about his neck into the king's presence—the favour and encouragement with which he rewarded the good, and the contrast between this bright scene of national prosperity, and the distresses of the country immediately subsequent to his death, have naturally caused our older annalists to dwell with fond regret upon the memory of a sovereign, cut off in the prime of his years, in the midst of his usefulness, and destined to be the last of his race. "It happened, therefore," says Fordun, "that during all the years subsequent to the king's majority, the whole body of his subjects lived in tranquillity and peace, in a joyous and secure liberty, so that to his reign might be applied the words of Isaias, in the Holy Scriptures, 'My people did dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places.'" The oldest Scottish song now known, is a species of lyric elegy upon the death of this monarch, lamenting the sorrowful changes which took place upon his death. "Our gold was turned into lead," says the weeping muse, "our abundance of good ale and good cheer vanished, our rich wines, our sweet music, and our gleesome pastimes, are all longed for in vain, since he, our good King Alex-

ander, who ruled over us in love and loyalty, is dead."*

It is difficult, from the scanty materials which now remain, to acquire any very clear or definite information as to the moral and intellectual condition of the country at this remote era. What learning and knowledge there was, undoubtedly belonged to the clergy, the only class in the community who received a liberal education, for which they were generally indebted to the foreign schools or universities of England and France. There seems reason to believe that the accomplishments of reading and writing were rare, even amongst this intellectual class; and as to the barons, their knowledge, if it extended to the repetition of a Latin prayer on the cross hilt of their sword, and the affixing their seal to a feudal charter, was esteemed amply sufficient, as well for their spiritual, as for their temporal wants. If such was the condition of the higher classes, it may be easily conceived how deep and deplorable was the ignorance of the great body of the people. Instructed by the clergy in the outward and splendid ceremonials of the Catholic ritual, which, even to an enlightened understanding, are calculated to substitute a material and carnal, for a holy and spiritual worship; their minds were also daily fed by the superstitious homilies, and miraculous tradition-

* The reader has already seen the original, in black letter, on the title-page, which, although undoubtedly corrupted and modernized in the interval between the death of Alexander, and the composition of Wynton, is nevertheless the earliest specimen of Scottish song

ary legends, of the itinerant priests and begging friars. Their imagination, full of such strange and extravagant materials, acquired strength in proportion to the ignorance and darkness of the mind, and the weakness of the reasoning faculty; and produced in the body of the people, and, if we may judge from the historical fragments which have reached our times, even in the minds of the educated portion of the clergy, a degree of credulity, and a capacity of superstitious belief, which is difficult to be described. This condition or temperament of mind, will be better understood by an example of one of the legends themselves, then popular in the country, which I select from Fordun, and which, it is to be observed, is recounted by that otherwise authentic and valuable historian, with perfect gravity and good faith. "It happened upon a time," says he, "that Ralph, Abbot of Kinloss, was on a journey, along with some brother abbots of the Cistertian Order, who were summoned to attend a general chapter. Their cook travelled along with them; and one day observing the abbots to be much tired and worn out, having zeal, but not according to knowledge," (I use the expressions of the historian,) "he mixed a quantity of flesh with the fish-stews which he was preparing for his superiors, and by the cunning of his art, so cooked it up, that it became exquisitely savoury, but yet seemed only to be fish fried in butter. The abbots eat largely, but asked no questions for conscience sake; and then, as was their wont after meals, retired to bed. Deep sleep fell upon all except the Abbot of Kinloss, who, as he lay awake, ga-

zing on a high window in his dormitory, saw, to his horror, a black Ethiop, of a grim and terrible aspect, enter through the casement into the chamber, comporting himself as if he felt an excellent odour. This horrid guest then walked slowly up to each bed, and drawing the curtains, gazed in with a smile of triumph upon the sleeping brethren. At last, coming to the cook's bed, he could not conceal his joy, but embracing the sleeping and unconscious delinquent, kissed him with much affection. He next looked fiercely at the abbot, who sat upright in his bed, staring with dismay on such proceedings, and then dissolving into a cloud of smoke, he vanished from his eyes. In the morning, the pious Ralph sent for the traitor of the kitchen, and recounted to him the horrid vision of the night, upon which the cook fell down at the feet of his superior, confessed the fraud he had practised upon the fish-stew, and promised, for the future, to conduct his culinary mystery with more attention to the spiritual, than to the carnal, wants of his brethren."* How graphically ludicrous is this story, if it did not bring along with it a melancholy reflection upon that thick and hopeless moral twilight which must have overcast the mind of a people, when the clergy did not hesitate to recount, and the multitude to believe, such absurd fables!

Fatal as was such a condition of mind to the cause of religion and good morals, it formed, on the other hand, the very soil in which the spirit of romantic fiction, and the belief of supernatural

* Fordun a Goodal, vol. ii. p. 44.

agencies, both of mortals and of spirits, were calculated to flourish and produce their seductive fruits. The mythology of the Norsemen, a people whose imagination and high poetical temperament seem to have been as wild and excursive as their lives, was, as we have seen already, for many centuries prevalent in the Western Islands; and whether we look to this element, to the superstitious and religious creed of the original Celtic population, or to the tribes of new deities and foreign-bred ghosts and demons who flocked in along with the Saxon and Norman adventurers, it is evident, that a belief in magic and astrology—a conviction that the caves, and woods, and rivers, were peopled by powerful and invisible spirits—and a persuasion that it was given to some favoured or fated mortals to foresee events, and even to control and direct the supernatural agents whom they compelled to be their ministers —exerted deep and general influence amongst a people in whom the blood of these various races was indubitably mingled. Of all this there are many proofs to be found in the pages of our ancient chronicles. We find it, for example, the general belief of the country, that immediately previous to the battle of Largs, Saint Margaret, the wife of Malcolm Canmore, appeared to a brave knight, Sir John Wemyss, as he lay sick in bed; in one hand the beautiful inhabitant of heaven led a knight refulgent in arms, having his helmet surmounted with a golden coronet, whilst there followed her three glorious-looking warriors in shining steel, and of courageous aspect. "This," said she, addressing the

recumbent baron, "is my revered lord and husband, and these are my sons, once kings of this realm, with whom I hasten to the field at Largs, where we shall triumph over our invaders."* On another occasion, during the reign of this monarch, an antique and beautiful cross was dug up near the town of Peebles, and hard by was found an urn, with the bones and ashes of a human body, which the learned antiquaries of the thirteenth century pronounced to belong to some Scottish martyr, who had died under the Maximinian persecution in Britain. To this place the populace instantly flocked in great multitudes, to present their offerings; and the miracles which were wrought by this ancient relic were so extraordinary and so frequent, that the king, by the advice of the Bishop of Glasgow, thought proper to erect a church upon the spot. But perhaps the most striking corroboration of the love of romantic fiction, and the prevalence of superstitious belief, under the reign of this monarch, is to be found in the story of that extraordinary personage, Thomas of Herculdoun, commonly known by the name of Thomas the Rhymer. It was then matter of undoubting popular belief, that this reputed prophet had been carried away by the Queen of Fairyland; that he had remained with his enamoured and beautiful spouse for many years, and at last returned, in a mysterious manner, upon earth, and to his native country of Scotland, where he exhibited his supernatural powers, by predicting the sud-

* Fordun a Goodal, vol. ii. p. 97.

den death of the king, and delighted his countrymen by the composition of the romantic poem of Sir Tristrem, which still remains to us, a rude, but interesting, specimen of the poetical literature of the age. This sincere belief in the marvellous and supernatural, which even the light of increasing knowledge and civilisation finds it difficult to dispossess from its stronghold in the human mind, was increased by the tales and songs of the minstrels, as they travelled, welcome and honoured guests, from castle to castle. It was cherished also by the institutions of chivalry, which had made considerable progress in Scotland under the reign of this monarch, by the errant spirit of adventure which prompted the knights to pass their time in the silent solitudes of nature, " under the shade of melancholy boughs," beneath the cold light of the moon, and conversing with those midnight sounds, and midnight musings, which afford the best materials for the extravagant fictions of the imagination.

If, however, in one essential point of view, the clergy under this reign, and for many succeeding ages of Scottish history, are to be described as neglecting the spiritual condition of their people, and leaving their minds to be occupied by such wild and romantic fictions as those above alluded to, it may yet be remarked, that it is difficult to determine how far this censure ought to be carried. Some of these ecclesiastics, perhaps, there were, who possessed a knowledge of divine truth, which, from the terror of the papal denunciations, or other selfish causes, they refused to communicate to the world; but there is reason to

believe that the greater part were themselves, as to pure religion, in a state of deplorable darkness and ignorance. In another point of view, however, they were entitled to the gratitude of the country, for they undoubtedly were its great improvers in all the useful arts. They were the greatest farmers; they brought the land into cultivation, cleared it of its brushwood and marshes, enclosed it with hedges, turned part into orchards, part into gardens, erected mills and farm granges, and encouraged their serfs and cottagers to settle in little villages and communities, which they protected and fostered. They were the greatest architects and builders; and their beautiful cathedrals, and princely convents and monasteries, rose under their hands, with a splendour of ornament, and an imposing grandeur of effect, which may challenge a comparison with the finest remains of Greece or Rome.

The construction, also, of these immense edifices demanded, and, of course, encouraged, the particular and respective arts of numerous other workmen and craftsmen. Their iron work required the labour of the smith; their timbers, and joists, and scaffolding, that of the carpenter; their exquisite carved screens, and painted windows—their silver shrines and ornamented vestments and banners, encouraged the painters, glass-stainers, carvers, jewellers, and embroiderers; and by affording them constant employment, increased their skill and ingenuity in their profession. The domestic arts, too, which minister to the comfort or luxury of life, such as wine-making, cooking, baking, brewing; the preservation of

fruits in their liquid juices, or of dried and candied sweetmeats; the management of the dairy; the rearing of domestic animals; the erection of dovecots; the enclosure and preservation of rabbit warrens, and numerous other branches of domestic economy, and "outfield" wealth, undoubtedly owed to the clergy of those remote times their highest improvement, and sometimes their original invention. They were, besides, the greatest mercantile adventurers in the country, employing ships which were their own property, and freighting them with their wool and hides, their fish and skins, to Flanders, and other parts of the continent. For these they received in return the richest manufactures and productions of the Flemish or Italian looms, with the silks, rarities, and spices of the East, which, it is well known, were constantly to be found in the marts and stalls of the great mercantile cities of Italy and Flanders. The pages of the cartularies, or charter books, of the various religious houses, which, in the destruction of their monastery or convent, have been preserved to our own times, contain the most decided proofs of the truth of this picture of ecclesiastical industry and improvement; and in concluding it, we must not forget, that within the walls of the same religious houses, was preserved that small portion of knowledge and of literature, which was then to be found in Scotland; and that in the cell of the monk, however dark its spiritual or intellectual gloom, the feeble and wavering spark of science was at least preserved from utter extinction.

Under this reign, the nation may perhaps be

pretty accurately divided into three classes. The first included the nobility and barons, along with the dignified clergy, and the religious orders of monks and friars: the next class were the free vassals and farmers, who cultivated the lands belonging to the king, the clergy, and the nobles, and of whom the great body of the feudal armies of those times was composed; and lastly, the extensive and numerous class of serfs, or slaves, who were as much the property of the lord of the soil, as the cattle or instruments of husbandry by which it was cultivated. Of this melancholy fact, there is the most decided evidence in records, whose authenticity is unquestionable, which prove that the state of these lower orders, who, under the various names of villeyns, bondmen, *nativi cottarii*, formed the great body of the people, was one of absolute servitude. Upon the acknowledged principle, that their children and children's children, to the remotest class of descendants, were the property of the lord of the soil, we find their genealogies preserved in the books or cartularies of the religious houses with the utmost care; their wealth, and the products of their industry too, belonged to their master; and their persons, where they had deserted the farm or the estate upon which he had placed them, could be reclaimed like any other stray animal which had wandered from home.

In the remote times of which we speak, under the reign of this monarch, the wealth and annual revenue of the sovereign consisted in the rents of the crown lands, which were numerous and extensive; in the rents also of the royal burghs,

and the lands annexed to them, which at this period belonged in property to the king, and were either held in his own hands, or let out to farm; in the customs or taxes levied upon the exports and imports of the kingdom; and in the gifts or presents made to the king by his nobles and his clergy on all great and solemn occasions of rejoicing, such as the coronation of the sovereign, his marriage, the birth or christening of an heir to the crown, the conferring knighthood on the king's eldest son, and the like seasons of popular festivity.

As for the nobility and barons, their riches consisted chiefly in the produce of their large feudal estates, which they levied in kind, and consumed in support of their numerous vassals and retainers, in their flocks of sheep, herds of cattle, and droves of wild horses; in the wealth of the little towns or communities, which, under the name of burghs of barony, many of the highest nobility possessed in property; in their fisheries, which they cultivated with great care and attention; in the tolls or imposts which they levied from travellers and commercial adventurers as they passed through their dominions; and in the salaries or annual allowances which they enjoyed from the crown, in payment of their offices of justitiar, chancellor, chamberlain, constable, sheriff, or other inferior and delegated situations. The wealth of the free farmers and the burghers resulted partly from the sale of their crops and their cattle, partly from the prices paid for their goods which they manufactured and exposed for sale. These last seem principally to have con-

sisted of saddles, arms and armour, buff-jerkins, coats, caps, gloves, bridles, bows and arrows, besides various other articles of female dress, or ornaments. But perhaps a more lucrative source of their opulence was to be found in the profits of their commercial adventure, and in the foreign trade which they carried on to a great extent. In the management of this, there is evidence in the amount of the customs and duties which they paid, and in the large sums which on different occasions they advanced to the necessities of the kingdom, that they had realized no inconsiderable fortunes in ready money. The offer of the wealthy Lombards to establish factories at Queensferry has been already mentioned; and the foreign names of many of the Scottish merchants, which are to be found in the rolls in the Tower, demonstrate that the trade of Scotland, under the reign of Alexander III., had induced many Germans, Flemings, and Italians, to settle in the kingdom. We have the testimony of the writer of the Chronicle of Lanercost, who was a contemporary, that at this period, Berwick, the great commercial port of Scotland, was so populous and opulent, that it deserved the name of a second Alexandria; and there can be little doubt, that, although far inferior to this enterprising city, the other royal burghs of Scotland were proportionally rich and flourishing.

MICHAEL SCOTT.

Before their eyes the Wizard lay,
As if he had not been dead a day.
His hoary beard in silver roll'd,
He seem'd some seventy winters old,
A palmer's amice wrapt him round,
With a wrought Spanish baldric bound,
Like a pilgrim from beyond the sea:
His left hand held his Book of Might;
A silver cross was in his right;
The lamp was placed beside his knee:
High and majestic was his look,
At which the fellest fiends had shook,
And all unruffled was his face;
They trusted his soul had gotten grace.

Lay of the Last Minstrel, Canto II.

MICHAEL SCOTT.

Birth of Michael Scott—Education at Oxford—State of that University—Goes from Oxford to Paris—Visits Italy—Makes his way into Spain—Studies at the University of Toledo—Averroes—Michael Scott translates Aristotle's History of Animals from the Arabic—He is patronised by the Emperor Frederick the Second—Frederick's great Scheme for a complete Translation of the Works of Aristotle—Difficulties of the Undertaking—State of Science and Philosophy under the Arabians—State of Learning under the Califs in Spain—Translations and Original Works of Michael Scott—He returns to England—Revisits his Native Country—Mission to Norway—His Death—Character—Believed to be a Prophet and a Magician—Traditions of him in Italy—Stories of his Supernatural Exploits in Scotland.

FEW names in Scottish history are surrounded with so deep an air of mystery and romance as that of the Wizard Michael Scott; and it may perhaps be regarded as rather an ungrateful task to strip this distinguished magician of his robes of "gramarie," and to restore him to those sober

regions which belong to authentic history, and are peopled with more common-rate philosophers. But after the severer hand of biography has removed from the canvass much of the richer colours in which the credulity of the vulgar, and the imagination of the last and greatest of the minstrels, have invested him, it is some consolation to find, that there will be left the picture of no ordinary man.

Michael Scott, or, as he is sometimes denominated, Michael Mathematicus, was born in Scotland some time previous to the year 1214, about the commencement of the reign of Alexander II. According to the tradition of the neighbourhood, which is confirmed by an ancient printed copy of his work on Physiognomy, the place of his birth was Balwerie, the ancient seat of his family, in the county of Fife. From his earliest youth he is said to have devoted himself to the cultivation of the sciences. In his native country, however, he could receive nothing but the bare rudiments of education, as Scotland did not possess at this period any public seminaries for the education of youth. The casual lessons of some learned monk, and perhaps an introduction to the limited library of his convent, composed all the advantages which the future astronomer and physician could enjoy at home; and for higher and more regular instruction, it was necessary to seek the universities of the sister country, and the schools of France and Italy.

The ancient university of Oxford enjoyed at this early date throughout all Europe a splendid reputation. During the twelfth century, Henry

II. and Richard I. had conferred upon it some extraordinary privileges; under the reign of John, at the commencement of the thirteenth century, three thousand students were at one time resident; and Henry III., although in some respects a weak monarch, and deficient in that energy of character which the turbulence of the period demanded, was a munificent patron of literature. New colleges were erected, additional immunities conferred by pontifical and regal bounty; and Oxford, in the words of Mathew Paris, was considered as "the second school of the church in Europe."

To this famous university Michael Scott repaired, and devoted himself with deep application to philosophical pursuits. It is true, indeed, that in this dark period of the middle ages, scarcely any studies deserving the name of real philosophy were cultivated either at Oxford or elsewhere; yet, in the midst of the errors of the scholastic philosophy, and the puerilities which infected the sciences of ethics and physics, as well as other branches of studious enquiry, some real knowledge was to be found, and the love of truth, and the spirit of investigation, although misdirected, were not extinguished. The study of practical astronomy in those periods, even when confounded with the doctrines, and made subservient to the purposes, of judicial astrology, conducted the adept to an accurate examination of the changes in the positions and conjunctions of the heavenly bodies, to a use of the rude astronomical instruments of the times, and to an ardent cultivation of the sister science of geometry.*

* Antony Wood, History of Oxford, vol. i. p. 196.

At the time when Michael Scott became a student of the University of Oxford, this last science was extremely popular. We learn this from the works of a contemporary author, Roger Bacon, an extraordinary man, who appears to have possessed much of that freedom of thought, that passion for experiment, and that contempt for the received systems of philosophy, which re-appeared, nearly four centuries afterwards, in his great namesake, Lord Verulam. To the science of astronomy were united, amongst the pursuits which were fashionable at this time, the study of the learned languages, embracing not only Latin, and, although more rarely read, Greek, but the Hebrew and the Arabic, the sciences of logic and of rhetoric, of theology, and of chemistry. This last science comprehended within its range the mystery of alchymy, an art which was at this period not only very passionately cultivated by the most learned men in the kingdom, but which had become the subject of royal patronage and munificence. The sagacious and politic Edward I. seems to have been so far transported by his belief in the transmutation of metals, that he invited the famous Lully, one of the greatest philosophers of his time, into his dominions; and it was then currently believed, that the gold which was expended in fitting out an expedition to the Holy Land, had issued, not from the exchequer of the king, but from the laboratory of the sage.*

The University of Oxford was possessed at this period of very high privileges. The jurisdiction of the civil magistrate did not extend over the

* Roger Bacon, Opus Majus, p. 472.

immense body of ecclesiastical students; and the unpunished arrogance of these "young clerks," as they were called, led frequently to serious commotions, not only between the citizens and the University, but between the different sects, or, as they were termed, *nations*, of the students themselves. Hostile banners were borne by the armies of the contending nations; the peaceful habit of the student, and the intellectual armour of Aristotle, were exchanged for more sanguinary weapons; and blood was spilt, and lives were sacrificed, before these scholastic feuds could be appeased.* In the midst of such commotions, however, philosophy and the sciences, as they then existed, were very ardently cultivated; and Michael Scott acquired at this period that remarkable knowledge of the Latin, and perhaps of the rudiments of the Arabic language, which afterwards enabled him to become the translator of the works of Aristotle from the Arabic versions of Avicenna and Averroes.

After having completed his studies at Oxford, he repaired, according to the custom of that age, to the University of Paris, where it seems probable that he was a fellow-student with Roger Bacon; and here, such was the enthusiasm with which he devoted himself to the science of mathematics, that he became known by the academic surname of Michael the Mathematician. He applied himself, also, to the study of sacred letters and of divinity; and after having gained in these faculties a high reputation, he received the degree

* Mathew Paris, sub anno 1236.

of doctor in theology.* John Baconthorp, an English Carmelite friar, who made much noise in his time, and obtained at Paris the pompous title of the "Resolute Doctor, and the Prince of the Averroists," has distinguished Michael in one of his treatises as having attained to distinguished eminence as a theologian; and if we may form an opinion from the works which he soon after gave to the world, the Scottish Wizard had applied himself, during his academical career at Paris, not only to mathematics and theology, but, with a particular ardour, to astrology, to chemistry, and to medicine.

After having acquired at Paris this learned reputation, he determined to continue his travels, and visited many foreign countries and universities.† Amongst these, he first sought the far-famed College of Padua; and such appears to have been the impression there created by his talents, that his essays on the science of judicial astrology were no longer, as in France, confined within the walls of a university. His fame became noised abroad, and he began to publish to the world those predictions of future events which were remembered in later times with awe and reverence in Italy.‡ Villani, a historian who wrote long after the reputed prophet was gathered to his fathers, records a prediction of Michael Scott's, which he declares had been rigidly fulfilled; and Dante has given him, in his character of a magician, a conspicuous place in his Inferno.§

* Bulæus, Hist. Universit. Paris, vol. iii. p. 701.
† Pitseus, p. 374. ‡ Villani, lib. x. cap. v. p. 195.
§ Inferno, canto xx.

From Italy, still untired in the pursuit of those limited stores of knowledge which the benighted state of philosophy afforded to the student of the thirteenth century, he made his way into Spain, then partly in the possession of the Arabians, and which, under these Mahometan conquerors, was unquestionably the most enlightened portion of Europe. Here, that he might perfect himself in the knowledge of the language, and become acquainted with the philosophy of this remarkable people, he repaired to Toledo, of which the University was then highly celebrated, especially for the cultivation of the occult sciences. This was a line of study which, from the part he had already assumed as a magician and a prophet in Italy, must have been peculiarly attractive; but it was by no means exclusively pursued. On the contrary, he began and concluded at Toledo a work, which, if we consider the period when it was written, was undoubtedly of an uncommon and laborious nature—a translation from the Arabic into Latin of Aristotle's nineteen books on the History of Animals.*

At the head of the Saracenic philosophy at this period was placed the famous Averroes, the father of the sect of the Averroists, remarkable for his voluminous commentaries upon the works, and passionate adherence to the doctrines, of Aristotle. It is not improbable that the reputation which Michael brought into Spain, assisted by a congenial passion for the same studies, may have led to a meeting between Averroes and the

* Antony Wood, History of Oxford, vol. i. p. 287.

Scottish philosopher. Averroes was an inhabitant of Cordova, which, in the fame of its philosophers, historians, and poets, had been long the first city in Spain; and it is difficult to believe that Michael should have left Toledo, without visiting the most learned scholar of the most learned university in the country. If these two remarkable men did meet, the translation from Aristotle may have been undertaken at the request of his Arabian disciple. But this is entirely conjectural, and is not supported by any direct authority.

However this may be, the learned of the western world were now made acquainted for the first time, in a Latin translation, with any considerable work of the great founder of the Peripatetic School; and the period was at hand when Aristotle was destined to find an illustrious patron, and Michael Scott to become the instrument of a still more general dissemination of his writings. This patron was the Emperor Frederic II., who, although engaged in those projects of ambition which brought him into the eye of the world chiefly in the character of a conqueror, had yet found leisure to devote himself to science and philosophy, and was then universally regarded as the most learned prince in Europe.*

Frederic was not only himself a scholar and an author: he was a munificent supporter of letters. He had founded many new schools throughout his dominions, and had restored to splendour many

* Henry's Hist. of Britain, vol. viii. p. 221. Menckenius, Biblioth. Virorum Militia ac Scriptis Illustrium, p. 203.

academies which had fallen into decay; he encouraged the resort of the most celebrated scholars to his court; and, that these might derive their opinions from what he considered the purest sources, he now determined to procure correct and genuine translations of Aristotle, the father of philosophy.

The great difficulty was, to find scholars able and ready to labour in this important undertaking. For its accomplishment, to use an expressive legal phrase, there was no *copia peritorum*, no plenitude of skilful authors. The only man in Europe who had already translated a portion of Aristotle was Michael Scott; and we need not wonder that we soon find him at the imperial court, promoted to the office of Astrologer to Frederic, and occupying the first place amongst the scholars to whom he intrusted his new design. One principal objection, however, presented itself, which, as far as accuracy is to be regarded as the first requisite in a translation, ought to have appeared insuperable. A Greek author was to be translated, and the translators were ignorant of the Greek language, which was then almost wholly extinct in the west of Europe. Recourse was therefore to be had to the Arabic versions of Aristotle which had been executed by the Mahometan philosophers of the eleventh and twelfth centuries; and from these was to be completed, under the eye of the emperor, this new Latin translation, intended to enlighten and improve the philosophic world of the thirteenth century.

A singular history might be written (and how large a portion in the moral history of our species

would it embrace!) of the fate and fortunes of the philosophy of the Stagyrite, of the many barbarous doctrines it has supported, and more barbarous translations in which it has spoken, through the long twilight of the middle ages, till we arrive at the brilliant period of its revival in the Peripatetic School of Italy. The attempt of Frederic forms a middle and prominent era in the annals of the Aristotelian philosophy, and, indeed, in the history of human knowledge. From the seventh to the twelfth century, letters were in the lowest state of decline; and during those forgotten ages which preceded the rise of the scholastic philosophy, nothing could be more deplorable than the thick darkness which overspread the face of Europe.* But philosophy and literature, in their exile from the west, found a retreat at the Mahometan courts of Bagdat and Cordova. To Arabia and to Spain, where the precious sparks of science were still preserved, was Frederic, the great literary patron of the thirteenth century, obliged to turn his eyes, when he projected a revival of the school of Aristotle; and it will be necessary for a few moments to consider the condition of the scientific world of Arabia, that we may be able to appreciate the nature of the obligation conferred upon Europe by the emperor, and the consequences which were likely to result from the efforts of Michael Scott.

The arms of the Arabian califs had triumphed over the liberties of Greece in the beginning of the seventh century, when, as yet unvisited by

* Brucker, Hist. Philos. vol. iii. p. 700.

any love of literature or philosophy, the commanders of the Faithful permitted to their followers only two subjects of study, the sword and the Koran. At this period, the fate of letters and philosophy was disastrous; they had been banished with violence from their ancient and chartered seats amongst the Christians, and were expelled by religion and by state policy from the dominions of the califs. Even the use of the Greek language was abolished by a royal decree of Walid, the predecessor of Almansur;* and from the period of the seventh century, till we reach the days of Alraschid, in the commencement of the ninth, no book in Greek was to be found throughout the wide extent of the Arabian empire. But the very measure which had been intended to extinguish, became the cause of the revival of the Grecian philosophy.

In consequence of this public proscription of their original language, the works of a few Greek authors were translated into Syriac or Arabic; and after this moral eclipse, which overspread the world of science and philosophy during the seventh and eighth centuries, a more auspicious dawning began to be perceived upon the accession of the house of the Abassides. Almansur, the second calif of the race, was himself a theologian and an astronomer; high rewards were promised by him to those learned men who should translate the writings of the Greeks upon philosophy, astronomy, or the mathematics; the poets, too, of this great people, were ardently studied;

* Brucker, vol. iii. p. 22.

and old Mæonides, destined for ever to be the last forgotten in the wreck, and the first to be remembered in the revival of letters, again raised his head, and sung the story of Troy in a Syriac translation.* The Arabian philosophers, indeed, appear to have been still too ignorant of the Greek tongue to accomplish the wishes of the calif; but his Christian subjects of Syria were familiar with this noble language, and they immediately began to translate the Greek writers, not into the Arabic, but into the Syriac. These efforts of Almansur were ardently seconded by his successor, the well-known Haron Alraschid, whose munificent patronage was especially extended to poetry, and who, in the words of an Arabic historian,† never walked abroad without a hundred wise men in his train. But the ardour and universality of Arabian genius, and the enthusiastic generosity of Arabian patronage, were not seen in their full glory till the califate of Almamon, son of Alraschid, and the Augustus of the East. On the accession of this prince, a few Greek authors had, as we have seen, been already translated into the Syriac, the vernacular language of his capital of Bagdat; but these were little studied by the Arabians, and the calif, having called a solemn assembly of the wisest doctors in his dominions, commanded them to recite the names of the most celebrated Greek, Persian, Chaldæan, and Egyptian writers on philosophy, and the various arts and sciences. Emissaries were then dispatched to Syria, Armenia,

* Abulfarius, Dynast. ix. quoted in Brucker, vol. iii. p. 23.
† Elmacin. Histor. Saracenica, book ii. p. 120.

and Egypt; negotiations were opened with the princes in whose dominions the envied volumes were to be found; the treasures of the calif were willingly expended in the purchase of immense bales of science and philosophy; and the camels of the desert groaned in their way to Bagdat beneath the unwonted weight of Aristotle and Galen, of Plato and Hippocrates.

It is a remarkable circumstance, that it was amongst the Christian Arabs—of whom a body, composed of converts from the different tribes, had separated themselves from the followers of the Prophet, and seized some strong fortresses near Hiram—that there now arose the two greatest revivers of Greek literature, John Mesue, of Damascus, and Honain ben Isaac. Mesue, who was physician to the calif, was commanded to superintend and direct the labours of that association of learned men, to whom the translation of the Greek authors was committed;* but it is to Honain ben Isaac, whose knowledge of the language, and acquaintance with the philosophy of Greece was admitted, even by the fastidious scholars of the sixteenth century, to have been profound, that Arabia then acknowledged the greatest—and that Europe, in the opinion of some learned authors, still continues to owe no inconsiderable—obligations. This Christian Arab was a physician, a poet, and an orator. He delivered prelections upon the Greek language, and composed poetical pieces, both in Greek and in Arabic; but, encouraged by the ardour and munificence of Almamon,

* Brucker, vol. iii. pp. 28, 35.

he soon devoted himself wholly to translation, and under his instructions, a band of eminent disciples arose, who emulated the example of their master. To him, with peculiar propriety, was committed the task of making the first Arabic translation of Aristotle; and, if we are to believe an Eastern biographer, we are indebted for this great undertaking to an extraordinary nocturnal vision, in which the Stagyrite himself appeared, under the form of a venerable old man, and revealed his forgotten name to the Commander of the Faithful.*

These early and generous efforts of philosophy, which began in the eighth and ninth centuries, under Almansur, Alraschid, and Almamon, were seconded by the patronage, and often by the example, of a long line of Mussulman princes; and the schools of Bagdat, Cufa, and Bassora, continued to flourish, and science and literature to distinguish themselves amongst the Arabians, by many splendid exertions, till the seminaries of learning were swept from their foundations, and the Eastern muses driven into hopeless banishment, by the dreadful invasion of Tamerlane, in the fourteenth century.

When the Arabians were making this remarkable progress in the East, the rest of Europe was, comparatively, dark and ignorant; but that revolution which gave to the empire of Arabia a sultan of the house of the Abassides, produced soon, in a very distant quarter, the most important effects; and, from the collision between the jarring elements of civil faction, a spark was

* Abi Osbaia, quoted in Brucker, vol. iii. p. 35.

struck, which rekindled the flame of science and philosophy in the West. Abdalrahman, a prince of the house of the Ommiades, having, in the wreck of his family, escaped to Spain, displayed the standard of rebellion, and, by his bravery and his talents, at length succeeded in establishing in that country an independent dominion. The Califate of Cordova became, under the two successors of Abdalrahman, a rival, in power and magnificence, to that of Bagdat, and the same causes which had already created so ardent a passion for learning in the parent state, appear to have produced a similar, and almost simultaneous effect, within the distant territories of the revolted province. In the cultivation of the various branches of human knowledge, in the foundation of schools, the endowment of colleges, and the munificent patronage of letters, and in affording, by their own example, the highest encouragement to the poet, the philosopher, and the historian, the califs of Spain were in no respect inferior to their brethren of Bagdat. It was here that, during the thirteenth century, arose the celebrated Averroes, an author who, although ignorant of the Greek language, had become so passionately fond of the philosophy of Aristotle, as it appeared in the Arabic translations, that he devoted his life to the task of composing a Commentary upon his favourite philosopher. It seems to have been his object, and he pursued it with unwearied diligence, to entwine the principles of the Aristotelian philosophy into the system of Mahometan jurisprudence and theology, and he succeeded in making the name of the Averroists, for some time, almost

as famous throughout Europe as that of his great master.*

We have seen the enlightened state of Arabia and Spain, while the rest of the world was involved in comparative darkness and ignorance. One thing alone seemed wanting—this was, some mode by which the more distant and benighted regions of Europe should profit by the dispersion of those works, whose *originals* had been destroyed, or still lay buried in the East; and for such purpose a set of men soon appeared, whose habits and profession peculiarly fitted them to transport the scientific and literary stores of the East into the West of Europe. These were the Jews, a nation devoted by heaven to a life of wandering, acute and learned in the languages of both hemispheres, and, from their general profession as physicians, acceptable guests in most countries which they visited. They brought from Spain not only the works and translations of the Arabians who had settled in that kingdom, but of the remoter literati of Bagdat; and, not contented with being the mere carriers and retailers of philosophy, they availed themselves of their knowledge of the Arabic, and published translations of some of the best Grecian authors, from the Arabic text into the Hebrew.†

Such was the condition of Arabian literature in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries; such the fate and fortunes of the Aristotelian philosophy amongst the followers of the Prophet, at the

* Casiri, vol. i. p. 184; Brucker, vol. iii. p. 97.

† Henry, Hist. Brit., vol. vi. p. 168; Casiri, vol. i. p. 184.

time when Frederic II. determined, through the medium of these Arabic translations, to restore the works of the Stagyrite to the learned world of Europe. In obedience, accordingly, to the injunctions of the emperor, Michael Scott commenced his labours, nor did he conclude them till he had translated and commented on the greater part of the works of the philosopher. He had already, as we have seen, completed at Toledo, a Latin version of Aristotle's History of Animals. The manner in which this production commences is solemn and singular. " In the name," says he, " of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Omnipotent, the Compassionate, and the Holy God, here begins that Dissertation which Aristotle composed upon the Knowledge of the Natures of Animals, both of the Land and of the Sea. Translated by Master Michael Scott, at Toledo." To the same Treatise are prefixed some Leonine verses,* explaining, in barbarous Latinity, the order and arrangement of the subject; but into any critical analysis of this work, or any detailed enumeration of his other voluminous translations, it would be idle to enter. The Scottish Magician appears to have been an enthusiast in natural history, for we find, that, in addition to his other labours upon the brute creation, he composed an Abridgement of Avicenna's Commentaries on Aristotle's History of Animals; a work preserved in MS. at Oxford, and afterwards printed at Venice, in 1493. This treatise is addressed to Frederic II.,

* Antony Wood, History of Oxford, p. 287; Tanner's Bibliotheca, p. 526.

in language very different from the common strain of adulation employed by authors towards princes. With them, the royal name is employed as reflecting its lustre upon the work; with Michael, it is the book which is to shed a glory upon the emperor, "to become an honour to his head, and a chain to his neck." In addition to these translations, the Magician, at the request of his royal master, composed a work, to which he gave the title of "Liber Introductorius, sive Judicia Quæstionum;" written, as Antony Wood informs us, purposely for fresh scholars, and such as were raw in judgment.* It is a large volume, and embraces the whole science of astronomy, and the sister art of astrology. He wrote also voluminous Commentaries upon the ten books of the Nicomachean Ethics, and nearly the whole of the Physics of Aristotle, in which he probably followed the Arabic version of Averroes.

If from these treatises, which he presented in a Latin garb to his imperial patron, we turn to his original works, it must be allowed, that they convey a strange and revolting picture of the fantastic and puerile philosophy of the thirteenth century. It was at the particular request of the emperor, that Michael, during his residence at his court, composed his Dissertation on Physiognomy, a work not only absurd in its principles, but, in its enumeration of the various signs which enable an adept to form a correct judgment of the different dispositions of men and women, and of the rules by which we may discern, from an ex-

* Antony Wood, History of Oxford, p. 287.

amination of the various parts of the human body, the intellectual qualities of individuals, not by any means over delicate in its descriptions and illustrations. It commences with a laboured and dignified proemium to Frederic, in which, as on a former occasion, he addresses this representative of the Cæsars more in the familiar style of a sage who instructs a disciple, than of an author who lays his work at the feet of an emperor. If we are to give credit to another part of this dedication, he had not only insinuated himself into the confidence of this warlike prince, but it was by his particular advice that the emperor encouraged the resort of so many ingenious philosophers and learned doctors to his court, and was wont to engage with them in friendly argument and familiar discourse. "Hence," says he, "it is by my advice and counsel that learned men, and grave and ingenious doctors, are found around thee at thy court, and that thou art often induced to enter into discourse with them, conducting the conversation with mingled wisdom and urbanity."*

According to Michael's definition, physiognomy is to be considered as a science of a very high character, embracing within its range some of the noblest subjects upon which the human intellect can be employed. "It is the doctrine of safety," says he, "the election of good, the avoidance of evil. It is the comprehension of virtue, the detestation and pretermission of vice. The knowledge of this science is induced and created by the true love of God, and the fear of the devil;

* Phisionomia, edit. 1477, p. 1.

by the principle of faith, and the hope of the imperishable reward of eternal life."* When we compare this high-wrought definition, with the shallow and trifling opinions, and the indecent ribaldries, which compose the greater part of the work, it is difficult to say whether we should be most surprised at the folly of the author who could write, or of the world which could greedily swallow no less than thirteen editions, of such a production.

Another work usually ascribed to Michael Scott, is the Mensa Philosophica, a translation of which was published in England in the year 1609, entitled, "The Philosopher's Banquet, furnished with a few dishes for health, but large discourse for pleasure." It is a very whimsical performance. "The use of this book," says the English translator, "is to make a man able to judge of his disposition, and of the state of his body, as well as of the effects, natures, and dispositions of those things wherewith we daily feed our bodies. The next is to give us a general insight and brief notice of histories, and men of greatest fame and note; and the next is, that here we may recreate, and make merry ourselves at our tables." He adds, "that it is a treatise of special notice in its kind, and written first in Latin by Michael Scotus." From this sketch of the nature of the Philosopher's Banquet, we may readily believe that the discussions which it contains are tolerably multifarious. They are besides ludicrously heterogeneous both in their

* Phisionomia, edit. 1477, p. 2.

nature and juxta-position; the work treats of ram's flesh in one chapter, and of the bishops of the Gentiles in another; of pot-herbs, and wicked women. It investigates the actions of kings and emperors, and explains the causes why some eggs crack in the fire and others do not. It treats of the nature and dignity of friendship, and endeavours to determine whether fishes chew their meat or no. Last of all, it contains certain "honest and merry jests, to exhilarate our bodies and minds at our tables, which are to be served in like carawayes at the end of our feast." Although such is the absurd and puerile description of some of the subjects, yet in other portions it exhibits considerable shrewdness of observation, and the frequent quotations from the volumes of Arabian physicians and sages, from Rases, Averroes, and Avicenna, give great countenance to the supposition of its having been written by their Scottish disciple. In addition to the lucubrations already mentioned, Gesner informs us, that he composed for the recreation of the emperor a Treatise on the Sphere of Sacrobosco, a work entitled Astronomical Diagrams, a book on the Opinions of Astrologers, a Dissertation on Chiromancy; and another Treatise on the Signs of the Planets.* Of these various treatises, the most popular appears to have been his questions on the Sphere of Sacrobosco. Justin de Rubeira, a printer of Bologna, in the year 1495, about two hundred years after the death of the author, published an edition of these "Questions" or Problems, with the following

* Gesner, Biblioth. p. 607.

title, evincing that the lapse of two centuries, so far from impairing, had added lustre to his reputation: "The work of Michael Scott, that most excellent and inimitable discoverer of the motions of nature, and of the courses of the stars; upon the author of the Sphere, with the Mathematical Questions, most diligently corrected."*

The emperor, however, whose time was now engrossed by schemes of ambition, and his exchequer drained by continual and expensive wars, could probably afford to give little else than empty praise to his philosophic instructor; and although Michael, in the spirit of the age, had become an experienced alchymist, this delusive science must rather have impoverished than enriched him. It is likely that these reasons induced him to bid farewell to the court of Frederic, and to devote himself seriously to the study of medicine as a profession, in which art he soon arrived at a high reputation, and possessed, if we may believe an intelligent, though anonymous author, the most extraordinary, and even miraculous skill. "The leprosy, the gout, the dropsy, and other dreadful diseases, generally thought incurable, were with little trouble, and in the most wonderful manner, removed by his art."†

After a residence of many years in Germany, Michael passed over into England on his return to his native country, preceded, as we may easily conceive, by those rumours of his power as a ma-

* Panzeri Annal. Typogr. vol. i. 231.

† MS. Anonymi de Claris doctrina Scotis. In Sir Robert Sibbald's MS. Hist. Literaria Gentis Scotorum, preserved in the Advocates' Library, Edinburgh.

gician, which were eagerly listened to by the superstitious credulity of a dark and ignorant age. The English throne was then filled by Edward I., who was employed at this time in those able schemes for the subjugation of Scotland, which he attempted to carry into execution at an immense expense of blood and treasure, and in violation of the rights of nations, and of his own honour. It was one part of his policy, if we may believe an English antiquary, to endeavour to lower the character of the Scottish people, by compelling all the most learned scholars of this nation to reside at the universities of England. "This year," says Antony Wood, "the king compelled all such Scotchmen as were of singular knowledge in learning or literature, to be resident in Oxford, doubting lest the Scotch nobility, increasing in politic prudence by their instructions, should seek to throw off the yoke of bondage." The celebrated John Duns Scotus, was one of those scholars who suffered under this persecution, being led chained and a captive into England, along with eleven other ecclesiastical prisoners.* Michael Scott fortunately arrived a considerable time before this rigorous edict was carried into effect, and his destiny was more tolerable. Edward, who had always a strong disposition to believe in alchymy and the occult sciences, received him with kindness, retained him for some time at his court, and afterwards permitted him to pass into his native country.

* Antony Wood, History of Oxford, vol. i. p. 366. Vita Joannis Dunsii a Mathaeo Veglense ; a rare work, published at Padua, 1671.

After his long absence, he arrived in Scotland at that critical conjuncture, when the nation was plunged into grief by the death of Alexander III.; and it became necessary to send ambassadors to bring over from Norway the young Queen Margaret, grand-daughter to the deceased monarch. It appears from unquestionable evidence that Sir Michael Scot of Balwearie, and Sir David Wemyss, were, by the Regents of the kingdom, directed to proceed to Norway upon this important service. It is well known that Edward I., who intended to marry his eldest son to the heiress of Scotland, had the chief management of the negotiations with Eric King of Norway; and the circumstances of his previous acquaintance with the English monarch, in conjunction with the popular tradition upon the subject, seem to leave no room for doubt that this knightly ambassador of the same name was none other than our author, Michael Scott.* His long residence abroad, united to his age and experience, peculiarly recommended him for such a foreign mission; and conjecture may supply some plausible arguments to increase the probability that he would be gratified by a visit to a country, at this dark period believed to be the peculiar haunt of those who cultivated the occult sciences, and maintained an intercourse with the invisible world. But whatever gratification the Wizard may have individually experienced from an intercourse with the Prospers or Medeas of Scandinavia, the mission itself was melancholy and

* Sibbald's History of Fife and Kinross, pp. 125, 127.

unfortunate. The youthful heiress of the Scottish throne, known in history by the name of the Maiden of Norway, sickened on her passage to Scotland, and died in Orkney, leaving her kingdom to be torn and distracted by the competition between Bruce and Baliol, and the deep-laid intrigues of the royal umpire Edward. We learn from Sir Robert Sibbald, that in his time there was preserved in the house of Wemyss a silver basin of an antique fashion, which was presented to Sir David Wemyss, the fellow ambassador of Michael Scott, by the King of Norway.* This is the last occasion in which we can trace the name of Michael Scott. He appears to have died soon after his return, after having attained an extreme age, fortunate in this, that he did not live to witness the complicated miseries of his native country.

In the brief but interesting accounts of this singular man, which we meet with in the ancient Chronicles of Italy, it is mentioned that he was the inventor of a new species of casque or steel basnet, denominated a cervilerium,† which he commonly wore under the furred or velvet cap, used by the learned of those times. The origin of this invention is curious. In those dark periods, when the belief of magic was universal, not only amongst the lower ranks, but with the learned and educated classes of the community, it was reported that the Wizard, having cast his

* Buchanan's Hist. Scot. book viii. c. 3. Wynton's Chron. book viii. chap. i. Rymer's Fœdera, vol. viii. p. 533.

† Riccobaldi Ferrariensis Historia Imperatorum—in Muratori, vol. ix. p. 128.

own horoscope, had discovered that his death was to be occasioned by a stone falling upon his bare skull. With that anxiety which clings to life, he endeavoured to defeat the demon whom he served, and by repeated incantations constructed this magic casque, which he vainly deemed invulnerable. But his fate, according to the tradition of Italy, was not to be avoided. In passing a cathedral, when the bell was ringing for vespers, Michael entered to pay his devotions, and forgetful of his cervilerium, which was fixed inside his cap, uncovered as he reverentially knelt upon the stone floor. The moment of his fate was arrived. The rope of the belfry had loosened one of the carved corbels which ornamented the interior of the roof beneath which the Magician knelt; before he could remove, the sharp and heavy mass descended on his forehead, and whilst it confirmed the infallibility of his prescience, in an instant deprived him of life. Michael, however, according to the account of Benvenuto da Imola, had strength enough to lift up the stone and ascertain its weight, after which he declared it was of the exact size he expected; and that nothing was left him but to die, which he did accordingly,* after very properly making his will. It is needless to remark that this fable is confuted by the return of Michael to his native country; but it appears to have been the origin of a tradition still current amongst the peasantry of Scotland, and which ascribes a miraculous power

* Benvenuto da Imola. Comment. on Dante, book xx. c. 115.

to the bonnet of the Wizard. It is curious to find the tale of the invulnerable cervilerium of the Italians, travelling on the breath of credulity and superstition into the "far north countrie" of which the Magician was a native, and only changed by tradition from the blue steel worked and welded by magic art, into the blue bonnet which was waited on by Scottish demons, who were heard wailing in mid air when it was waved by its dreaded master.

It is well known to the student of Italian literature, that the Magician has obtained a niche in the Inferno of Dante.

"Quel altro che ne fianchi e cosi poco
Michele Scoto fu, che veramente
Delle magiche frode seppe il gioco."

Another poet of Italy, but of infinitely inferior note, Theophilo Folengi, who published a collection of Latin Macaronic verses, under the fictitious name of Merlinus Coccaius, has given, in strange and almost unintelligible language, a singular picture of his incantations.

"Behold renown'd Scotus take his stand
Beneath a tree's deep shadow, and there draw
His magic circle—in its orb describe
Signs, cycles, characters of uncouth shapes;
And with imperious voice his demons call.
Four devils come—one from the golden west,
Another from the east; another still
Sails onwards from the south—and last of all
Arrives the northern devil; by their aid
He forms a wondrous bridle, which he fits
Upon a jet black steed, whose back, nor clothes,
Nor saddle, e'er encumber'd—Up he mounts,
Cleaves the thin air like shaft from Turkish bow,

Eyes with contemptuous gaze the fading earth,
And caprioles amongst the painted clouds.
Oft, too, with rites unhallow'd, from the neck
Of his dark courser he will pluck the locks,
And burn them as a sacrifice to Him
Who gives him power o'er Nature: next he limns
With silver wand upon the smooth firm beach
A mimic ship—look out, where ocean's verge
Meets the blue sky, a whitening speck is seen,
That nears and nears—her canvass spreads to heav'n;
Fair blows the wind, and roaring through the waves,
On comes the Demon-ship, in which he sails
To farthest Ind—but this adventure needs
A sacrifice more potent—human marrow
Scoop'd from the spine, and burnt to the dark power
Whom he must serve. 'Tis said that he who wears
His magic cap, invisible may walk,
And none so lynx-eyed as detect his presence,
In the most peopled city—yet beware,
Let him not, trusting to the demon's power,
Cross the white splendour of the sun, for there,
Although no palpable substance is discern'd,
His shadow will betray him."

Such is a somewhat free translation of the verses of the pretended Merlinus Coccaius.* It is well known that many traditions are still prevalent in Scotland concerning the extraordinary powers of the Wizard; and if we consider the thick cloud of ignorance which overspread the country at the period of his return from the continent, and the very small materials which are required by superstition as a groundwork for her dark and mysterious stories, we shall not wonder at the result. The Arabic books which he brought along with him, the apparatus of his laboratory,

* Merlini Coccaii Macaronica, xviii. p. 273.

his mathematical and astronomical instruments, the Oriental costume generally worn by the astrologers of the times, and the appearance of the white-haired and venerable sage, as he sat on the roof *of his tower of Balwearie, observing the face of* the heavens, and conversing with the stars, were all amply sufficient to impress the minds of the vulgar with awe and terror. "Accordingly," says Sir Walter Scott, in his Notes on the Lay of the Last Minstrel, "the memory of Sir Michael Scott survives in many a legend, and in the south of Scotland any work of great labour and antiquity is ascribed either to the agency of Auld Michael, of Sir William Wallace, or of the devil." Some of the most current of these traditions are so happily described by the above mentioned writer, that we cannot refrain from quoting the passage. "Michael was chosen," it is said, "to go upon an embassy to obtain from the King of France satisfaction for certain piracies committed by his subjects upon those of Scotland. Instead of preparing a new equipage and splendid retinue, the ambassador retreated to his study, and evoked a fiend, in the shape of a huge black horse, mounted upon his back, and forced him to fly through the air towards France. As they crossed the sea, the devil insidiously asked his rider what it was that the old women of Scotland muttered at bedtime. A less experienced wizard might have answered, that it was the Pater Noster, which would have licensed the devil to precipitate him from his back. But Michael sternly replied, 'What is that to thee? Mount, Diabolus, and fly!' When he arrived at Paris, he

tied his horse to the gate of the palace, entered, and boldly delivered his message. An ambassador with so little of the pomp and circumstance of diplomacy, was not received with much respect, and the king was about to return a contemptuous refusal to his demand, when Michael besought him to suspend his resolution till he had seen his horse stamp three times. The first stamp shook every steeple in Paris, and caused all the bells to ring, the second threw down three towers of the palace, and the infernal steed had lifted his foot to give the third stamp, when the king rather chose to dismiss Michael with the most ample concessions, than to stand the probable consequences. Another time, it is said, when residing at the tower of Oakwood, upon the Ettrick, about three miles above Selkirk, he heard of the fame of a sorceress, called the Witch of Falsehope, on the opposite side of the river. Michael went one morning to put her skill to the test, but was disappointed, by her denying positively any knowledge of the necromantic art. In his discourse with her, he laid his wand inadvertently on the table, which the hag observing, suddenly snatched it up, and struck him with it. Feeling the force of the charm, he rushed out of the house; but as it had conferred on him the external appearance of a hare, his servant, who waited without, halloo'd upon the discomfited Wizard his own hounds, and pursued him so close, that in order to obtain a moment's breathing to reverse the charm, Michael, after a very fatiguing course, was fain to take refuge in his own jaw-hole, Anglice, common sewer. In order to re-

venge himself of the Witch of Falsehope, Michael, one morning in the ensuing harvest, went to the hill above the house with his dogs, and sent down his servant to ask a bit of bread from the goodwife for his greyhounds, with instructions what to do if he met with a denial. Accordingly, when the witch had refused the boon with contumely, the servant, as his master had directed, laid above the door a paper which he had given him, containing, amongst many cabalistical words, the well-known rhyme,

"Maister Michael Scott's man
Sought meat, and gat nane."

Immediately the good old woman, instead of pursuing her domestic occupation, which was baking bread for the reapers, began to dance round the fire, repeating the rhyme, and continued this exercise, till her husband sent the reapers to the house, one after another, to see what had delayed their provision, but the charm caught each as they entered, and, losing all idea of returning, they joined in the dance and the chorus. At length the old man himself went to the house, but as his wife's frolic with Mr Michael, whom he had seen on the hill, made him a little cautious, he contented himself with looking in at the window, and saw the reapers at their involuntary exercise, dragging his wife, now completely exhausted, sometimes round, and sometimes through the fire, which was, as usual, in the midst of the house. Instead of entering, he saddled a horse, and rode up the hill, to humble himself before Michael, and beg a cessation of the spell, which

the good-natured warlock immediately granted, directing him to enter the house backwards, and with his left hand take the spell from above the door, which accordingly ended the supernatural dance. * * * Michael Scott," continues the same author, "once upon a time was much embarrassed by a spirit, for whom he was under the necessity of finding constant employment. He commanded him to build a cauld, or dam-head, across the Tweed at Kelso; it was accomplished in one night, and still does honour to the infernal architect. Michael next ordered that Eildon Hill, which was then a uniform cone, should be divided into three. Another night was sufficient to part its summit into the three picturesque peaks which it now bears. At length the enchanter conquered this indefatigable demon, by employing him in the hopeless and endless task of making ropes out of sea-sand."*

It is time, however, to return from these traditions, with which the common people of Scotland have uniformly connected his name, to the true character of Michael Scott. He lived in favour and friendship with two of the most warlike and powerful sovereigns in Europe. In a dark and ignorant age he was remarkable for his learning, and in times when to travel in search of knowledge to distant countries was a work of extreme danger, owing to the unlicensed manners of the feudal governments, he had largely embarked in the perilous adventure, and anxiously sought for knowledge in France, Italy, Germany,

* Notes to the Lay of the Last Minstrel, p. 255.

and Spain. He travelled, indeed, protected by the superstitious dread with which the vulgar regarded him, for he was universally reputed a magician; and many a fierce baron who would have cared little to have robbed the defenceless son of science as he passed his castle, may have trembled beneath his steel coat when the Wizard declared his far-famed name, and threatened to make him feel its power. It is pleasing thus to see superstition, which in later ages has been the bane of knowledge, becoming, in those earlier and darker periods, the protectress of infant science; and we shall not wonder at the universality of the belief which then prevailed, that all superior knowledge was connected with preternatural powers, when we consider that it was the interest of the men of science to encourage a belief so conducive to their personal security.

In our endeavours to estimate the talents of a sage of the thirteenth century, we must beware of looking at his attainments through the medium of our own times. He must be compared with men of his own age; his powers must be determined by the state of science in the countries where he lived, and wrote, and became celebrated. Appealing to such a criterion, the Scottish Wizard is entitled to no ordinary rank amongst those who were then esteemed the philosophers and scholars of Europe. He was certainly the first who gave Aristotle in a Latin translation to the learned world of the West. He was eminent as a mathematician and an astronomer—learned in the languages of modern Europe—deeply skilled in Arabic, and in the sciences of the East; he had

risen to high celebrity as a physician—and his knowledge of courts and kings, had recommended him to be employed in a diplomatic capacity by his own government. Nor has he been cheated of his fame. If we look to older authors, he lives in the pages of Roger Bacon, of Picus Mirandula, of Cornelius Agrippa. If we ask for his historical immortality, he is commemorated by Lesly and Buchanan,—if for his poetic honours, has not Dante snatched him from oblivion, and the last of the minstrels embalmed him in the imperishable substance of his first and most romantic poem?—nay, if he seeks for more popular and wider honour, even here he may not complain, whilst his miracles and incantations are yet recorded beside the cottage fire by many a grey-headed crone, and his fearful name still banishes the roses from the cheeks of the little audience that surround her.

Fortunate, too, he was in this circumstance, that, after his various travel and long residence abroad, he returned to enjoy in his native country the reputation which he had acquired; that he lived to a great age, and died full of years and of honour, before he had witnessed the dark and complicated calamities which were so soon to overwhelm the kingdom.—His books, we are informed by Dempster, after his death, were carefully concealed from the public view; and he adds, that the common people of Scotland, even in his time, believed that these forbidden volumes, containing the spells of the magician, were protected by the invisible demons who had once been the servants of their illustrious and potent master.

SIR WILLIAM WALLACE.

Dico tibi verum: Libertas optima rerum.
Nunquam servili sub nexu vivito, Fili.
FORDUN, *Scotichronicon*, b. xii. c. iii.

SIR WILLIAM WALLACE.



SECTION I.

Birth of Wallace—His Family—State of Scotland on the Death of Alexander III.—Competitors for the Crown—Designs of Edward I.—Contemplated Marriage between the Maiden of Norway and the Prince of Wales—Death of the young Queen in Orkney—Extraordinary conduct of Edward—Competition between Bruce and Baliol—Baliol declared King—War between Scotland and England—Siege of Berwick—Dethronement of Baliol—Settlement of Scotland by Edward in 1296—The Earl of Surrey appointed Governor—State of feeling in Scotland—Youth of Wallace—His indignation against the English—Slays Hislop, the Sheriff, in the Town of Lanark, and retreats to the Woods—Description of his Person—His first Enterprises against the English—Defeats Fenwick at Loudon—Joined by many of the Scottish Barons—Sir Andrew Moray of Bothwell—William, Lord Douglas—Defeat of Ormesby, the English Justiciar, at Perth—Lord Douglas makes himself master of the Castle of Sanquhar—Wallace's Cruelty to the English Ecclesiastics settled in Scotland—Reflections on this Subject—His deep Remorse, and Superstition—Adventure of Faudon—Progress of the War—Barns of Ayr—Dissensions

amongst the Scottish Barons—They Capitulate to Percy at Irvine—Wallace, with Sir Andrew Moray of Bothwell, retreats to the North—The Revolt against England spreads in the Counties of Aberdeen and Inverness—Wallace's great Popularity—His Expedition into Lorn, and Defeat of Macfadyan in the Pass of Brandir—Edward's Alarm at the Progress of the Rebellion—Wallace Defeats the English at Stirling.

THE brilliant and romantic colours with which the associations of youthful years continue, even in later life, to invest the memory of Wallace, render the task undertaken by his biographer one of difficult execution and uncertain success. His story, as recounted by Henry the Minstrel, has been familiar to his countrymen almost from childhood; and although its marvels must be questioned, and often condemned, by the severity of maturer judgment, there lingers a secret disposition rather to believe what they wish to be true, than to investigate with calmness what they dread to find false. The scenes of his infancy, described by his rhyming chronicler, the spots rendered sacred by his battles, and the caves and mountainous solitudes to which he retreated from the pursuit of his enemies, have been trod by the patriotic pilgrim, rather than investigated by the careful antiquary. Wherever tradition has been found to corroborate, even by its feeblest and most uncertain voice, the poetical story, these echoes of other years have been quoted as decisive proofs of its entire authenticity. It has never been suspected that the wonderful narrative of the Blind Minstrel, itself a very ancient work, is more likely to have been the parent of

the tradition, than the tradition the groundwork of the narrative,—that the light which lingers over the scenes connected in popular belief with the history of this extraordinary man, instead of an emanation from truth upon its written record, is a reflection thrown back by the tales of a popular poet upon the ideal localities which he has introduced, to give an air of reality to his inventions. Yet, although the work of this entertaining writer is to be perused with caution, and not to be followed as historical authority, except where corroborated by contemporary annals, or authentic records, it would be equally absurd to carry our scepticism to a contemptuous rejection of its whole contents. It is undoubtedly true that the admiration and credulity of the Minstrel Henry have thrown upon Wallace, as he is contemplated through the mists of time, the hues of poetry rather than of historic truth; yet when these are dispelled, and we approach, with the severity of nearer inspection and more impartial examination, to the figure of the patriot, it is still found to be one of heroic character and colossal proportions.

William Wallace appears to have been born about the middle of the reign of Alexander III., but the exact year of his birth is not satisfactorily ascertained. He was the second son of Sir Malcolm Wallace of Elderslie, near Paisley; and his mother appears to have been a sister of Reginald de Crawford, sheriff of Ayr.* Amid the various and intricate discussions relating to the condition

* Rotuli Scotiæ, vol. i. p. 23.

of his family, which have perplexed historians and genealogists, the account of Wynton is at once the most ancient and the most authentic.

> "He was come of gentlemen,
> In simple state he was then;
> His father was a manly knight,
> His mother was a lady bright;
> He was gotten and born in marriage;
> And his eldest brother the heritage
> Had and joyed all his days."

From this description, it is evident that Wallace belonged neither to the class of the high feudal nobility, nor to the free tenants, or yeomanry, but to that middle rank, which, by the proud barons, who esteemed themselves the companions of kings, was considered nearer to the condition of their vassals, than to an equality with themselves. It was this portion of the nobility, who, during the whole period of Wallace's career, opposed and thwarted him with feelings of mingled pride and fear; who compelled him to be what he undoubtedly was, the champion of the people, the liberator of his country by means of the lower classes of his countrymen, when the selfishness and venality of most of the great lords had consented to deliver it into the hands of a foreign power. But although unconnected with this corrupted class, Wallace was born in a rank which ensured him a martial education; and the condition of his father entitled him, if not to claim an equality, yet certainly to associate, with the proudest of the land. In those days, when the institutions of chivalry were regarded with so much veneration, the son of a knight and a landed

baron was esteemed noble, although in a restricted sense of the term; and there seems good reason to believe, that if Sir Malcolm Wallace did not attach himself to any great leader, or if we do not find his name in the public transactions of the times, he was prevented by the smallness of his family estate, and his indisposition to take a part in the discreditable intrigues which were then beginning to be acted in Scotland. These transactions, which occurred during the boyhood and youth of Wallace, were of an extraordinary nature, and demand our serious attention, as upon them depended much of his future career.

Upon the death of Alexander III. without children, the Scottish nation were thrown into a state of deep perplexity and distress. The nobles had indeed, during the life of their late monarch, solemnly affixed their seals to a deed which declared his grand-daughter Margaret, the daughter of Eric of Norway, the successor to the throne.* But she was an infant in a foreign land, and nothing but her precarious life stood between the people and all the miseries of a disputed succession. After the Maiden of Norway, the nearest claimants to the crown were two powerful barons, Robert Bruce, Lord of Annandale, and John Baliol, Lord of Galloway. The manner in which they claimed is extremely simple. William the Lion, who succeeded to the crown in 1165, had a brother, David, Earl of Huntingdon. In 1214, William transmitted the crown to his son, Alexander II., who was again succeeded

* Fœdera Angliæ, vol. ii. p. 266.

by his only son, Alexander III., in 1249. Failing, therefore, the descendants of this monarch, the crown reverted to the posterity of David, Earl of Huntingdon. This prince had three daughters: Margaret, the eldest, married Allan, Lord of Galloway, whose daughter, Devorguil, wedded John Baliol, and bore to him another John Baliol: The second daughter, Isabella, married Robert Bruce; and her son, Robert Bruce, Lord of Annandale, was the competitor for the crown: Ada, the third daughter, married Henry de Hastings, of whom was born Henry de Hastings, who was the father of John de Hastings, a third competitor. It is evident from all this, that the claim to the throne lay exclusively between Bruce and Baliol; and that while Baliol had the advantage of being the *great-grandson* of the Earl of Huntingdon, through Margaret, his eldest daughter, Bruce pleaded, what in the estimation of those days was not a decidedly inferior pretension, viz. that he was a link nearer, being the *grandson* of the same prince, by his second daughter, Isabella.

Within a month after the melancholy death of the king, and when it was yet uncertain whether the condition of the queen might not promise an heir to the throne, a meeting of the Estates was held at Scone, and six regents appointed for the government of Scotland.* Under their admi-

* Fordun, vol. ii. p. 136. In this historian there is no mention of a Parliament, or meeting of the Estates of the kingdom, in which this choice of the regents took place; nor does any contemporary record of it remain. Wynton, however, vol. ii. p. 10, calls it a meeting of the Estates,

nistration, the country was separated into two great divisions, the first including the whole district beyond the Firth of Forth, which was placed under the power of William Fraser, Bishop of St Andrews; Duncan, Earl of Fife; and Alexander, Earl of Buchan: the second comprehending the territory to the south of the same river, which was committed to the charge of Wishart, Bishop of Glasgow; John Comyn, Lord of Badenoch; and James, the High Stewart of Scotland. With these governors—(who were soon after reduced to four, by the murder of the Earl of Fife, and the death of the Earl of Buchan)—Edward I, who, as the granduncle of Margaret, was regarded by her father, Eric, in the light of a protector and adviser, entered immediately into a correspondence, which for some time appears to have been kept concealed. Its object, however, was undoubtedly to bring about a marriage between the infant heiress to the Scottish crown, and his eldest son, who was still a child, and by this means to accomplish his favourite plan of uniting England, Scotland, and Wales into one great kingdom in his own person. That both this monarch and his father, Henry III., had formed the design of re-establishing that unfounded claim of superiority over Scotland, as a fief of the Crown of England, which was extorted from William the Lion, and solemnly renounced by Richard I., is matter of historical certainty. The insidious attempt of Henry III., when he endeavoured, at the marriage of his daughter with Alexander III., to entrap the youthful sovereign of Scotland into an acknowledgment of feudal submission, and

the repetition of the same demand by Edward I. on the occasion of his coronation, demonstrated their purpose to the nobility, and to the nation at large. It was natural, therefore, that any intrigues of Edward, any attempt to get possession of the person of the youthful princess for the purpose of uniting her to his son, should be regarded with extreme distrust and suspicion, especially by those who were in the line of succession to the crown. Accordingly, we find that, in 1286, on the 20th of September, not eight months after Alexander's death, a remarkable meeting of some powerful Scottish and English nobles took place at Turnberry, the castle of Robert Bruce, Earl of Carrick, son of Robert Bruce, Lord of Annandale and Cleveland, the object of which was apparently to support the claim of the elder Bruce to the throne, and to traverse and defeat the intrigues of Edward.* With the deep-laid schemes of the Plantagenet, the partisans of Bruce were probably made acquainted by two English nobles of high rank and influence, who privately repaired to Turnberry, and joined the faction of Bruce. These were Thomas de Clare, brother of Gilbert, Earl of Gloucester, and Richard de Burgh, Earl of Ulster, both of them nearly connected with Bruce, and naturally anxious to support his title to the crown.† The Scottish nobles, on the other hand, who met at Turnberry, were amongst the

* Dugdale's Baronetage, vol. i. p. 216.

† Scala Chronicle, quoted in Leland's Collectanea, vol. i. part ii. p. 539. "Gilbert Clare, Counte of Gloster, did greatley maintain the quarrel of Robert Bruce, because he had married his sister."

most potent and influential in that country. Their number included Patrick, Earl of Dunbar, and his three sons: Walter Stewart, Earl of Menteith: Bruce, Lord of Annandale; his two sons, the Earl of Carrick, and Bernard Bruce: James, the High Steward of Scotland, with John Stewart his brother: Angus, son of Donald, Lord of the Isles, and his son Alexander. The power and resources of these barons were extremely formidable, as they could bring into the field almost the undivided strength of the west and the south of Scotland; whilst it was well known that the Earl of Dunbar, by his possession of the strong castle of that name, and of the passes which led from the one country to the other, could at his option facilitate or resist any mutual invasion; so that it was currently said Earl Patrick held the keys of England at his girdle. These nobles now entered into a solemn agreement, or band, as it was anciently denominated, of mutual defence and support; and, although the fact does not appear in the document which was drawn up on the occasion, there can be little doubt that they were decidedly adverse to the designs of the King of England, and to the projected marriage and succession of the Maiden of Norway.

It cannot be stated as historically true, but it is in the highest degree probable, that the rival competitor, Baliol, had, at the same time, his secret meetings with the barons who supported his claim, and, although agreeing with Bruce in his inclination to resist the succession of the Maiden of Norway, that he was his mortal opponent in his design of making himself master of

a throne which Baliol regarded as his hereditary right. Even in the assembly of the States of the kingdom, which occurred immediately subsequent to the death of the king, a keen dispute, relative to the succession, took place between the partisans of Bruce and Baliol, in which the nobles and the prelates of the realm were divided into two factions; and soon after, such was the violence of the two parties, that, uncontrolled by the authority of the regents, they broke out into rebellion against the government, and open war with each other, which continued to spread its ravages through the country for two years. The Earl of Carrick laid waste the county of Wigton, of which the greater part, if not the whole, was the property of Baliol. This haughty baron again retaliated upon the seigniories of Bruce and his partisans, whilst the regents exerted themselves in vain to re-establish the peace and tranquillity of the realm.*

Whilst every thing in Scotland thus tended to anarchy, Edward, with that prudent caution, in not hastily discovering his ultimate designs, which forms a striking feature in his character, kept himself at a distance from the scenes of commotion, with which he was yet well acquainted. He knew that he had friends amongst the regents, who would not be backward to solicit his interference when the proper time arrived; and he had already acquired an influence over Eric, the King of Norway, then only in his eighteenth year, which

* Chamberlain Accounts, vol. i. Excerpt. e Rotulo Compotorum. Temp. Custodum Regni, pp. 56, 62.

he trusted he should turn to his advantage. Whilst he neglected no opportunity of evincing the utmost friendship and consideration for the governors of Scotland, and the nation at large, he hesitated not to denounce the Earl of Carrick and his party as "the king's enemies of Scotland;"* and, in the meantime, he dispatched a secret envoy to the court of Rome, for the purpose of procuring a dispensation for the marriage of his son, Prince Edward, with the Maiden of Norway. In his petition to the pope, Edward insists upon the increasing hostility and rancour which would be fostered between the two kingdoms should the hand of that infant princess, and with it her realm of Scotland, be settled upon any other than his son; and Nicholas IV., who was anxious at this moment to conciliate the English monarch, lent a willing ear to the suggestion, and readily granted the dispensation.†

Things being thus prepared, it was judged proper that the King of England should now publicly appear in his character of mediator between the revolted nobles of Scotland and the regents of the kingdom. The King of Norway, accordingly, becoming alarmed for the condition of his daughter's dominions, dispatched an embassy to consult with Edward upon the state of her affairs in Scotland; and at the same time, the regents gave a commission to the Bishops of St Andrews

* Runnington's edition of the Statutes, vol. i. p. 120. Ordinatio pro Statu Hiberniæ. See also Macpherson's Annals of Commerce, vol. i. p. 449.

† Fœdera Angliæ, vol. ii. p. 450.

and Glasgow, expressly directing them to enter into a negotiation with the King of England and the messengers of Norway upon the state of the country, empowering them to ratify whatever should be agreed upon, " saving in every article the honour and liberty of the kingdom, and providing that the conditions should involve nothing which in future ages may be prejudicial to the realm and to the people of Scotland:"* A memorable clause, afterwards violated by Edward, but evincing that, at least in this early period, the regents either did not suspect the ultimate designs of the English king in insisting upon his claim of superiority as lord paramount of Scotland, or, suspecting, were determined to defeat them.

The natural explanation of Plantagenet's policy at this early period is to be found in his determination to unite Scotland to his dominions. For this purpose, we see he had secretly determined upon a marriage between his son and the infant queen; but, if this failed, he reserved to himself the claim of feudal superiority, which entitled him, upon the smallest pretext of rebellion or commotion, to assert his right of property over the kingdom. The slightest mention, however, of this claim, at so early a period of his proceedings, might have ruined the marriage; whilst a total renunciation of it, if the marriage failed, would have thwarted him in his ulterior designs; and his conduct, in avoiding the dangers on both sides, was a masterpiece of state policy. Edward first prevailed upon the Scottish regents to send commissioners to

* Fœdera Angliæ, p. 431.

Salisbury, who, along with the ambassadors from Norway, and his own envoys, the Earls of Warren and Pembroke, resolved, that the infant queen, under certain conditions, should be sent to England, and from thence into her own kingdom. The Norwegians agreed, for their own monarch, that he would deliver her to Edward free of all matrimonial engagement; and the English monarch, on his side, came under a solemn obligation, so soon as Scotland was sufficiently tranquil for her safe residence, to send her thither equally free as he received her, under the condition, that the Scots should not dispose of her in marriage to any person without the express council of Edward, and the consent of her father Eric. To this the Scottish envoys consented; and they also agreed, that if any of the regents were obnoxious to the Queen of Scotland or to her father, they should be removed by the advice of the councillors of Norway and Scotland, and other persons selected for this purpose by the King of England—a very important provision, and evidently directed against the High Steward of Scotland, (one of the regents,) who had joined the confederacy at Turnberry, and taken part in the insurrection of the Earl of Carrick.*

Although it is now obvious that the terms of this negotiation had a concealed reference to the intended marriage, and were eminently favourable to the views of Edward, still no public allusion was yet made to the union which he contemplated. Not long afterwards, however, the pro-

* Fœdera Angliæ, vol. ii. p. 466.

ject appears to have been universally known in Scotland; and the prelates and nobility of that country, having assembled at Brigham, (12th March, 1289,) drew up a letter to the King of England, in which they expressed their concurrence in the proposed alliance, and their joy in having received intelligence that The Apostle (the name which they gave to the pope) had granted a dispensation for the marriage of Margaret, their dear lady and queen, with the heir of England. It is difficult to discover by what method Edward had succeeded in putting down the party of the Earl of Carrick, and reconciling the discordant factions in the country to the intended match; but it is certain that the letter addressed to him from Brigham, is signed not only by Robert Bruce, Lord of Annandale, and by his son the Earl of Carrick, but by the whole barons of his party, and every person of consequence, whether spiritual or temporal, in Scotland.* It is remarkable, however, that although they style themselves the entire "community" of Scotland, there is no appearance for the burghs, or for that great body of the yeomanry, or free tenants, who may properly be called the body of the people.

In consequence of this letter, which was followed by another of similar import addressed to the King of Norway, this long-contemplated marriage was finally agreed on in a solemn meeting of the Scottish Estates, which was held at Brigham, in the month of July 1290, and attend-

* Fœdera Angliæ, vol. ii. p. 471.

ed upon the part of England by the Bishop of Durham, and five other plenipotentiaries. Upon this occasion, it is of importance to remark, that the Scottish nobility, aware of the able and crafty conduct of the monarch with whom they treated, insisted on the insertion of certain provisions, which, had they not been afterwards openly infringed by Edward, must have secured, in the most effectual manner, the independence and the liberties of Scotland. The laws, liberties, and customs of that country, were to be inviolably observed throughout the kingdom in all time coming, saving always the rights which the King of England, or any other person, had possessed, previous to the treaty, in the marches, *or elsewhere.* The kingdom was to remain for ever separate and distinct from England, according to its ancient boundaries and marches, governed by its own chancellors, justiciars, chamberlains, and other officers, who were to be natives of the realm, and resident within it. No Parliament was to be held without the boundaries of the kingdom; no native of Scotland to be compelled to answer out of the kingdom for any offence which had taken place within it; and it was expressly stipulated, that failing Margaret and Edward, or either of them, without issue, the kingdom should return to the nearest heirs to whom it belonged of right, wholly, freely, absolutely, and without any subjection, so that nothing should either be added to, or taken from, the rights of the King of England, or of any other person whatever. It will be observed, that this last clause, as well as the former salvo, as to the

rights of the King of England in the marches, *or elsewhere*, was artfully expressed; for, under the specious appearance of a rigorous impartiality, it was so worded as to permit Edward, at any future period, to revive his claim of feudal superiority.

His next step was one of an extraordinary nature, and could hardly have been adopted without a secret understanding between the king and some of the Scottish commissioners or regents, whom he had gained over to his interest. Having taken his oath to observe all the stipulations of the treaty, he observed that it was impossible for him to fulfil his engagements, and to maintain the laws of Scotland, without the presence of an English governor in that country; and he appointed Anthony Beck, Bishop of Durham, to this high office. Either weakly unwilling to interrupt the amity of the deliberations for the accomplishment of the marriage, or perhaps prevailed on by more secret and solid considerations, the Scottish nobles did not resist this proposal, which was a direct violation of the terms of the treaty, under the mask of an anxiety to fulfil its purposes. Edward's next request, however, was not so tamely acquiesced in. He stated, that having heard rumours of commotions and civil disturbances in Scotland, he judged it proper that all the castles and fortalices of that country should be delivered into his hands. To this demand the Scots gave a peremptory refusal. These castles were held, they declared, by the various captains and governors, in the name, and for the behoof, of their youthful queen and Prince Edward, and

for her they would keep them, until she and her husband arrived in their own dominions, and received them from their hands. It is extraordinary that this last demand of Edward did not more effectually rouse the suspicions of the Scots—and that they continued to trust to the terms of a treaty which he had already broken in one important particular, and shown a disposition to infringe in its most essential stipulations.

All eyes now anxiously looked towards Norway. The Scottish ambassadors, Sir Michael Scott and Sir David Wemyss, had been sent to conduct the youthful queen into her dominions. It was known she had sailed, and the preparations to welcome her arrival were joyfully proceeding, when a melancholy rumour arrived that she had sickened at Orkney, which was soon succeeded by the overwhelming intelligence of her death. It would be difficult, perhaps, to point out a crisis in the history of any European kingdom, in which so much happiness or misery seemed to hang suspended on a single life; and we are not to wonder at the expressions of a contemporary prelate, "that at the report of her death the kingdom became disturbed, and the community sunk into despair." She was the last descendant of Alexander III., in whose days every man had sat in security under his own vine, none making him afraid; she had survived that lamented prince little more than four years, and now that she was gone, nothing stood between Scotland and two of the most grievous calamities which can befall a nation—war within its own bosom, kindled by the claims of various fierce

and powerful competitors, and the certainty of attack by an ambitious foreign power, who had long eagerly watched for an opportunity similar to that which now occurred. Scarcely, accordingly, had the certain news of her death arrived in Scotland, when symptoms of both these evils began unequivocally to manifest themselves. Bruce, the Lord of Annandale, suddenly came to Perth with a formidable force; the Earls of Mar and Athole assembled their feudal services; other powerful barons began to collect their armed vassals; and all those fierce and tumultuous spirits, to whom, even under its most peaceful aspect, the feudal system was apt to offer encouragement, issued from their little fortalices or mountain holds, allured by the hopes of plunder, and the certainty of confusion and change. Baliol, who was in England, had yet a friend in Fraser, the Bishop of St Andrews, who, with a traitorous policy, corresponded with Edward also, and intreated this monarch, as the plan best adapted to secure his own interest, to enter into an agreement with Baliol, and advance to the borders of Scotland.* In this way, according to the opinion of this crafty prelate, the effusion of blood would be prevented, and the people of Scotland be enabled, according to the terms of their oath, to elect as their monarch him who was nearest in blood to Alexander III.† The real import of this specious advice was, that Edward should gain Baliol to his interest, that Baliol should receive the kingdom under the condition of holding it as a

* Fœdera Angliæ, vol. ii. p. 1090. † Ibid. p. 580.

vassal of England, and that the English monarch, by his presence with his army on the borders, should dictate their choice to the Scottish people. All this, it may be imagined, the sagacious Plantagenet was not slow to comprehend; and so happy did the crisis appear to him for the execution of his designs, that a contemporary English historian informs us, he could not conceal his exultation, but declared to his privy councillors that the time had now arrived to reduce Scotland under his power, as effectually as he had already completed the subjection of Wales.*

He accordingly commanded the barons of Yorkshire, Westmoreland, Lancashire, Northumberland, and Cumberland, to meet him with their whole powers at Norham on the 3d of June, 1291; and he requested the nobility and clergy of Scotland to attend upon him at the same place in the month of May, for the purpose of deliberating upon the succession to the crown, and putting an end to those fatal and unnatural commotions which then distracted the kingdom, by weighing the claims of the various competitors, and distributing impartial justice to all. It has been made a matter of discussion amongst our historians, whether Edward was solicited or invited by the Scots themselves to become the umpire in the great question of the succession to the throne; and it is not unimportant to observe, that in his own account of the transactions there does not appear the slightest hint of such an invitation. But, however this may be, it is im-

* Annales Waverlienses, p. 242.

possible not to remark how artfully his invitation to the nobles who insisted on their right to the crown, was calculated to promote the ultimate views of Edward. It necessarily created in their minds a disposition to oblige a monarch, who had it in his power to reward his accommodating vassals with the present of a crown; it placed their individual ambition in direct and dangerous opposition to their patriotic principles; it prevented co-operation, by splitting a country, already unhappily divided, into still more numerous and bitter factions, and it thus gave time to Edward to mature his plans, to collect his strength, and to arm himself by political intrigue, as well as by actual force, against all opposition.

It ought to be recollected, that at this time many of the most powerful Scottish barons, who were of Norman extraction, possessed large estates in England, which were liable, according to the principles of the feudal law, to immediate forfeiture, upon any act of disobedience to their superior, the King of England. Over these persons, some of whom were competitors for the throne, Edward had thus a double tie; and the assembly of the prelates and nobles of Scotland having met him, according to his request, at Norham, the king, surrounded by his barons and nobility, addressed the Scots by the mouth of his High Justiciar, Roger le Brabason, and informed them, that having been apprized of the distress and perplexity which divided their kingdom, he had, in consequence of his great zeal and affection for those in whose welfare and defence he was personally interested, undertaken a jour-

ney from remote parts, that, as the undoubted superior and lord paramount of Scotland, he might, as was his duty, do justice to all who laid claim to the succession, and re-establish good order and tranquillity in the land. "My master, the King of England, therefore," continued Brabason, "requires of each and all of you, the prelates, nobles, barons, and community of Scotland, to acknowledge him forthwith as your true and undoubted lord superior, from whom you hold your lands, and whose decision, as such, you are bound to obey." At this demand, which, although not new, as there is strong reason to suspect, to some of the proudest and most powerful of the assembly, was yet generally as unexpected as it was insulting, the meeting became at once aware of the difficulties with which they were surrounded, and of the formidable union of power, ability, and ambition, of which they were ready to become the victims. They gazed doubtfully on each other, and all shrunk from a reply which must either announce the sacrifice of national independence, or bring upon them the wrath of a prince, whose power was as imminent and formidable as his resolution was unbending. At last, a member of the assembly stood up, and demanded delay. All were, till this moment, ignorant, he declared, that such a right of superiority existed in the person of the King of England; and upon so momentous a question, it was impossible, without flagrantly violating their oaths, solemnly taken after the death of their late monarch, to come to any resolution "while the throne is vacant."—"By holy Edward," cried the English

monarch, starting from his seat, "I will either have my just rights recognised, or perish in the vindication of them!"—"And to enforce this resolution," continues a contemporary English historian, "he had commanded his army to meet him, so that he might triumph over every opposition, were it of the most mortal nature." At the earnest request of the Scots, however, Edward consented to give them an interval of three weeks for deliberation, after which he expected them to meet him once more at Norham, there to acknowledge his superiority, and receive his judgment.

In three weeks, he knew that an English force far more formidable than any which could be brought against him would be gathered together at Norham, and to this, as well as to the opposite intrigues and dissensions amongst the various competitors for the crown, he confidently looked forward for a favourable result. Nor was he disappointed in his expectations. On the 2d of June, the prelates, nobles, and barons of Scotland, amongst whom were nine competitors for the crown, assembled on Holywell Haugh, a level plain opposite to the castle of Norham; and the Bishop of Bath and Wells, Chancellor of England, having opened the conferences in the name of his master, informed them that Edward, in virtue of his right of superiority as lord paramount of Scotland, would proceed to determine the succession to the kingdom. He then turned to the Lord of Annandale, whose claim to the crown has been already explained, and enquired of him whether he was content to receive judgment in this competition from his lord, Edward,

King of England, in his character of lord paramount of the kingdom of Scotland, and to abide by his decision. To this demand, Bruce, before the assembled prelates and barons, clearly and unhesitatingly replied, that he was content; that he acknowledged Edward as lord superior of Scotland, and awaited justice at his hands. The same question was then put to John de Baliol, Lord of Galloway, and the rest of the competitors, all of whom, either personally, or by their attorneys, returned the same answer, and affixed their seals to an instrument, which recorded their solemn surrender of the liberty of the contested kingdom.

It would be tedious as well as painful to enlarge upon the various steps in this extraordinary procedure of Edward. Having procured the acknowledgment of his superiority, his great difficulty was overcome. He affected, indeed, much deliberation and gravity in his endeavours to investigate the grounds of the various claims, but every step followed according to a previous arrangement, and led to a conclusion long resolved on. He appointed commissioners of both nations to assist him in his judgment; he accepted from the regents of Scotland, and from the governors of its castles, a surrender of the kingdom, which he immediately restored to them; he received the homage of Bruce, Baliol, and many others of the barons and the nobles; he ordered copies of the oaths of fealty, and the whole proceedings regarding his right of superiority, to be sent to the various monasteries throughout the kingdom; and finally appointed the competitors to meet him again at Berwick, on the 3d of August. It was

now only the 3d of June; and he employed the interval in taking a journey through Scotland, proceeding as far as Perth, and requiring freemen of all ranks and conditions to take the oaths of fealty. He then returned to Berwick, heard the claims of the competitors, requested further time to deliberate and consult the learned in foreign parts; and at length in his parliament, held upon the 17th of November, at Berwick-on-Tweed, which was attended by the prelates and nobility of both countries, he pronounced his final judgment in favour of John Baliol, declaring that the kingdom of Scotland must of necessity belong to him, because by the laws of both England and Scotland, in the succession to indivisible heritage, the more remote in degree in the first line of descendants, had ever been held to exclude the nearer degree in the second. He then commanded the regents to deliver the kingdom, with its castles and fortresses, into the hands of their new sovereign; and the last act of this extraordinary drama was concluded by the ceremony of breaking the Great Seal of Scotland, which had been used by the regents, into four pieces, and depositing the fragments in the English treasury; after which Baliol swore fealty to Edward, and repaired with his nobles to his coronation at Scone.

The reign of Baliol is known to have been one continued scene of humiliation and disaster. In the completion of his plan for the entire subjugation of Scotland, Edward's object was evidently to goad and irritate the vassal monarch either into an open declaration of war, or into a

series of acts of disobedience and contempt, which would entitle him, in his character of lord paramount, to enter that country with an army, and reduce it under his power by actual conquest. He began by violating the most solemn stipulations of the treaty of Brigham. He encouraged Scottish subjects to appeal from the decision of the judges in their own land to the courts at Westminster, and compelled the parties to attend there; he treated Baliol's remonstrances upon the subject with contempt, and indignantly informed his messengers, that, should he find it expedient, he would summon their sovereign himself to answer in the court of his lord paramount, in reply to any complaints which might be made against him. Nor was this at all intended to be an empty threat. It was almost immediately carried into effect; and in an important cause, in which Baliol, in the first parliament which he held at Scone, had pronounced judgment against Macduff, a son of the Earl of Fife, this aggrieved noble having appealed to Edward, the English monarch commanded Baliol to appear in his parliament in person, and answer to the complaint which was made against him. The indignation of the Scottish barons at this unworthy treatment of their sovereign, was very great; they observed the extreme and humiliating rigour with which Edward was inclined to exercise his authority as lord superior, and shame and remorse for the part which they had acted began to be mingled in their bosoms with the reviving feelings of wounded honour and ancient independence. In these sentiments they were supported by the

unanimous approbation of the whole body of their vassals and tenants, who, although not animated at this early period with that spirit of unforgiving hostility to England, which for many centuries marked the subsequent course of their history, were strong in the healthy feelings of a national liberty, which till now had never been invaded.

Relying, therefore, upon the support of his nobility and his people, Baliol refused at first to obey the summons of Edward; but after an interval he judged it prudent, before a final rupture, to attend the English parliament. On being asked for his defence against the complaint of Macduff—"I am," said he, "King of Scotland. To the complaint of Macduff, or to any matters respecting my kingdom, I dare not return an answer without the consent of my people."—"Whence comes this refusal?" cried Edward. "Are you not my liegeman? Do you deny your homage? Is it not my summons which brings you where you are?"—"It is true," replied Baliol, "that I am your liegeman for the kingdom of Scotland; but as the matters now before us concern the people of my kingdom, no less than myself, delay ought to be allowed me till I have consulted them, lest I should be misled for want of advice, more especially as those now with me neither will nor dare give me their opinion without solemnly consulting the Estates of the kingdom." This spirited remonstrance was interpreted by the English parliament into an act of contempt, and contumacious disobedience offered by a vassal to his superior; and they proceeded not only to pronounce judgment in favour of

Macduff, but to award damages against Baliol, whom they commanded, as a punishment for his feudal delinquency, to deliver into the hands of the King of England three of his principal castles, to remain in his possession till due satisfaction was made for the open recusancy of his vassal.

It was at this crisis in the affairs of Scotland that war broke out between Edward and Philip of France; and the Scottish barons, in their resentment against the rigour and injustice with which their monarch had been treated by Edward, assembled a parliament at Scone, in which they dismissed all Englishmen who were maintained in the service of the king at the Scottish court, appointed a committee of prelates and nobles, by whose advice the government was to be administered, entered into a treaty of marriage and alliance with France, by which the eldest son of Baliol was to be united to the daughter of Charles, Count of Anjou, and finally resolved on an immediate invasion of England. These measures, however, were too violent and precipitate; their plans wanted connexion and concentration, and their army, though brave, was disorderly and undisciplined. They invaded Cumberland, and besieged Carlisle, but were repulsed with loss; and a second inroad into Northumberland served only to exasperate their enemies, by the indiscriminate cruelty of their ravages, whilst it terminated in nothing decisive.

In the meantime, Edward, at the head of a large army, invaded Scotland by the eastern marches, and with that calm resolution and quiet forethought of revenge which belonged to his

character, proceeded to inflict upon the devoted country a terrible example of his offended justice. Berwick, a city which was the emporium of foreign commerce, where the wealthy Flemings had established a flourishing trade, and which, in the extent of its shipping, and the wealth and enterprise of its merchants, surpassed any other seaport in either country, was invested by the English monarch in person. His fleet, at the same moment, entered the river, and although repulsed in the attack by sea, the fury of the assault by land was not to be resisted. Some time before this, Baliol had sent the chief men of Fife, with their armed vassals, to strengthen this frontier town. Of these brave men, hardly one escaped. The Flemings, by the terms of their commercial charter, were bound to defend their factories against the English, and such was their fidelity and resolution, that when the town was entirely in possession of the enemy, and the massacre of seventeen thousand victims* literally caused the streets to flow with rivers of blood, they remained true to their engagements, and shutting themselves up in their Red Hall, which united in itself the qualities of a mercantile emporium and a feudal fortress, perished with their weapons in their hands, amidst the conflagration of their richest silks, and the destruction of immense bales of foreign manufacture.† The city was then given up to indiscri-

* Knighton, p. 2480.

† Scala Chronicle, quoted in Leland's Collectanea, vol. i. p. 473. "At this siege was Syr Richard of Cornewall, a noble Englisch man, slayn by a Fleming shoting a quarel oute of the Red Haule."

minate plunder, and the castle having been surrendered into the hands of the enemy by Sir William Douglas, who commanded it for the King of Scotland, Edward, neglecting a partial inroad which a division of the Scottish army had made into Redesdale and Tynedale, proceeded in his career of conquest, and determined to make himself master of the castle of Dunbar, one of the most important fortresses in the kingdom. With the object of relieving the besieged, a Scottish army advanced, and occupied an admirable position on the heights near Spot, the same ground on which, three hundred years after, the forces of the Covenanters were discovered by Cromwell, previous to the battle of Dunbar. On both occasions, a foolish and reckless precipitancy, the besetting sin of the Scottish military tactics throughout the whole period of their history, rendered unavailing the advantages of their position, and delivered them into the hands of their enemies. Mistaking a movement of the Earl of Surrey, who commanded an advanced division of ten thousand foot and a thousand horse, and was deploying through a valley, for the beginning of a flight, they now rashly abandoned their position upon the heights, and blowing their horns, which, according to the expression of a contemporary historian, "made a noise enough to have startled Hell itself," rushed down upon the enemy, whom, instead of a flying and disorderly mass, they found with levelled spears and in excellent array, ready to receive them. The consequence of such conduct was a total defeat, in which upwards of ten thousand of the Scots were slain, and the

flower of their nobility either left dead upon the field, or made prisoners by Edward. These barons were instantly sent off in chains to England, to be distributed amongst the various castles of that kingdom; and the monarch proceeded to reap the fruits of a victory, which, for the time at least, laid Scotland at his mercy. The strong castles of Roxburgh and Jedburgh were reduced, and garrisoned with English troops. Edinburgh, after a siege of eight days, fell into the hands of the victor. Stirling was next given up, and the exulting Plantagenet, whose army had been increased in its march by the arrival of thirty thousand fresh troops under the Earl of Ulster, proceeded northwards through Perth and Aberdeen, as far as Elgin.

When engaged at Perth in keeping the Feast of the Baptist with much feudal pomp and solemnity, Edward was accosted by the messengers of Baliol, who came to implore for peace. Previous to the battle of Dunbar, this unfortunate monarch, whose character presents an extraordinary combination of occasional magnanimity and spirit, with symptoms of great weakness and indecision, had transmitted to the King of England a formal renunciation of his homage, which was received with angry contempt. Edward now refused to see him; but commissioned the Bishop of Durham to communicate the terms upon which he might still hope for reconciliation with his liege lord. These were an unqualified acknowledgment of his unjust and wicked rebellion, and an unconditional surrender of himself and his kingdom into the hands of his

master the King of England. Humiliating as this was, Baliol was compelled to consent; and the ceremony of his public penance, which he performed in the churchyard of Strickathrow, a small village near Montrose, was accompanied by every circumstance of feudal disgrace which could be suggested by the barbarous ingenuity of the age. Being brought into the presence of the Bishop of Durham and the English barons, mounted on a sorry horse, he was commanded to dismount; and, on his treason being proclaimed, they proceeded to strip him of his regal ornaments. The crown was snatched from his head; the pelure, or ermine, torn from his royal mantle; the sceptre wrested from his hand, and every thing removed from him belonging to the state and dignity of a king. Standing then on the bare ground, clothed only in his shirt and drawers, and holding a white rod in his hand, he confessed his treason against his liege lord; deplored his being misled by evil counsellors into a declaration of war against England; acknowledged the justice of his punishment; and, not many days after, in the castle of Brechin, resigned his kingdom of Scotland, with his people and their homage, into the hands of his lord paramount. He then delivered his eldest son as a hostage for his fidelity; and in return for this unqualified surrender, he himself, and this unfortunate youth, were sent prisoners to England, and confined in the Tower.

In his victorious progress through the country, Edward, with a short-sighted policy which was natural to a rude age, endeavoured to carry off, or to obliterate, every thing which was connected

with the history of Scotland as an ancient and independent kingdom. He took with him to England the famous stone chair of Scone, in which, from very remote times, the Scottish kings had been inaugurated on the day of their coronation; and which, with superstitious veneration, had been regarded for many centuries as the national palladium.* He carried off the crown and the sceptre. He is said to have plundered the monasteries and conventual libraries of their earliest charters and historical documents, which, we cannot doubt, contained distinct evidence of the existence of Scotland as a wholly independent kingdom; and of the large mass of public writs and national muniments which he had already collected for the specious purpose of guiding his judgment in the competition between Bruce and Baliol, he is accused, by the Scottish historians, of having mutilated or obliterated some, and altogether destroyed others, which too broadly contradicted his pretensions, to be allowed to see the light.

Having concluded his expedition, which, from the siege of Berwick to the surrender of Baliol, occupied little more than three months,† Edward held his parliament at Berwick on the 28th of August, 1296, where he received the homage of the clergy and the nobles, with such of the lesser barons and free vassals and burghers as chose to obey his summons; and proceeded to settle, with great ability, and in many points with a laudable attention to justice and moderation, the govern-

* Hemingford, vol. i. p. 100.
† From 30th March to 10th July.

ment of his new dominions. The most galling measures were the garrisoning the various castles with English troops, and their delivery to English captains and governors. In other respects, no capricious or abrupt changes were introduced; the ancient jurisdictions remained; no wanton acts of rigour were committed, and they who held office under Baliol were suffered to remain. Yet with all this prudence, the chains which fell upon a conquered country were neither unfelt nor invisible. John Warenne, Earl of Surrey, was made guardian of Scotland. The office of high justiciar was committed to William Ormesby, and that of treasurer to Hugh de Cressingham. The nephew of the Earl of Surrey, Henry Percy, was appointed keeper of the county of Galloway and of the sheriffdom of Ayr; instead of the ancient Great Seal of Scotland, which had been broken into pieces when Baliol made his surrender at Brechin, a new seal, with the arms of England, was committed to Walter de Agmondescham, an English chancellor; and a new exchequer, formed on the model of that at Westminster, was appointed for the receiving of the king's rents at Berwick. These various officers immediately repaired to Scotland; and Edward, with the pride of successful conquest, and the satisfaction of having accomplished the great object of his ambition, returned in triumph to his hereditary states.

Such is a brief outline of the scenes of national distress amidst which William Wallace passed his youth. He had witnessed, as a boy, the independence, the security, and the happiness of his country under the reign of Alexander III.; and the con-

trast which he now beheld was of a nature to rouse the keenest feelings in a heart, which, from its earliest stirrings, even his enemies allow to have been animated by a love of liberty that nothing but death could extinguish. Edward, secure in what he esteemed the complete subjugation of Scotland, was now occupied with a war in France. Those of the Scottish nobles whom he most suspected, were strictly imprisoned in England; others, whom he could better trust, accompanied him in his expedition to Guienne; a few who had delivered hostages for their fidelity, were permitted to remain at home in a state of quiet and broken-hearted submission; and the land, terror-struck by the dreadful example of the massacre of Berwick, and the carnage at Dunbar, seemed to have sunk into a state of silent suffering and unresisting despair. But, concealed under this unpromising moral gloom, there was a healthy spirit of freedom at work, which the short-sighted views of the conqueror had not detected. Although the higher nobles and clergy, the wealthier knights and barons, the richer burghers and merchants, had renounced their independence, and taken the oath of homage at Berwick, or in Edward's progress through the country, there were some even of the first, and many more of the last, of these classes, who had fled far north into the fortresses of the interior, disdaining such submission; whilst in the breasts of the free vassals and farmers, which constituted the great body of the people who were trained to the use of arms, the spirit of determined resistance and animosity against their enemy was ready to burst forth with

a violence proportionable to the pressure of suffering with which they were loaded. The same great truth was, in short, apparent in Scotland, which has been made manifest in many a subsequent era of the history of liberty. The nobles of a country may be easily shut up in prisons, or driven into banishment, the clergy may be corrupted and gained over, the lesser barons may be forced, by the confiscation of their estates and the dread of utter ruin, into a temporary and deceitful allegiance to a conqueror; but the love of liberty in the feelings of the great body of a free people, is an immortal and inextinguishable principle, which can never be destroyed but by the extermination of the inhabitants themselves.

In the principal towns, where the conqueror kept a strict watch, and around the great castles and fortresses, which were garrisoned by English troops, all appeared sufficiently quiet and submissive; but at a distance from these, the country swarmed with fierce and discontented spirits: every remote valley, every wooded glen, or rocky cavern, or ancient forest, had its little band of brave and warlike men, who, with the tenacity and fervour of the national character, clung fondly to the shadow of their former liberty, and whenever they came in contact with the English soldiery, were ready to break out into acts of violence. Many of these, renouncing their settled homes and regular occupations, and deserted by their feudal masters, who were on the continent with Edward, began to organize themselves into predatory bands, which subsisted by plunder, infesting the highways, and attacking the straggling parties of

the English. These men, it is evident, only waited for a head to unite them into a formidable opposition to the government; and this was soon given them in Wallace.

His youth is said to have been passed chiefly under the care of his uncle, an ecclesiastic, who was settled at Dunipace, near Stirling, and who appears to have been animated with the strongest feelings of independence. Amid the cares of his education, which it is probable the impetuous and restless character of the pupil did not suffer to be very successful, two monkish lines, which he had learned from his uncle, were fondly remembered in after life, as having struck his young fancy with peculiar pleasure. They were probably all the Latin he retained, but they embodied, under their rude garb, a sentiment which, amid the bitterness of his country's sufferings, he was never weary of repeating; and we have Wallace's own authority for stating, that they had a striking and decided influence upon his future life. "When I was a youth," said he, "and under the care of my uncle, all that I could carry away from him was a single proverb, but it seemed to me above all price, and I never forgot it. It was this,—

'Dico tibi verum: Libertas optima rerum.
Nunquam servili sub nexu vivito, Fili.'"*

From Dunipace, there is a tradition that Wallace removed to Kilspindy, a village in the rich district called the Carse of Gowrie, and that he thence was sent to Dundee, where he received

* Fordun, vol. ii. p. 223.

such instruction as the limited education of those rude times could afford him. It was here, also, according to the same authority, that he became first acquainted with John Blair, who was afterwards a Benedictine monk: Blair was of like age with Wallace, and the two youths formed a lasting attachment to each other. When he became celebrated, Wallace chose his early friend for his chaplain; and it is a subject of deep regret, that a Latin life of his master and patron, which was written by Blair, has, with the exception of a few fragments, been lost or destroyed. At one or other of these places, all of which were visited by Edward, in his triumphant progress through the country subsequent to the battle of Falkirk, it is probable that Wallace saw the conqueror. His father, Sir Malcolm Wallace, upon the first publication of the orders for all to come in and take their oaths of allegiance to the English monarch, had fled from Elderslie into the mountainous district of the Lennox, accompanied by his eldest son; and it is one of the least improbable of the stories which rest on the single authority of the Minstrel, that he was, not long afterwards, slain in an encounter with the English at Kyle, in Ayrshire. His mother, meanwhile, had taken refuge with her father's relations; and Wallace, now advancing into manhood, found himself driven from his paternal home, an object of suspicion to the government, and avoided by those cautious and timid friends who regarded Scotland as lost, and preferred the quiet security of servitude to the desperate chances of insurrection.

Over all this his mind, pent up in a silent restraint, which, for a season, he was compelled to observe, brooded and rankled in secret; but an event now took place which settled his destiny, and drove him into open rebellion. It appears that he had formed an attachment to a beautiful woman who resided in the town of Lanark, and that, in passing through the streets of that burgh, well armed, and somewhat richly dressed, he was recognised by a troop of English soldiers, who surrounded and insulted him. Wallace, at first, would have prudently got clear of their insolence, but a contemptuous stroke which one of them made against his sword, provoked him to draw, and the culprit was laid dead at his feet. A tumult now arose, and, almost overpowered by numbers, he escaped with difficulty into the house of his mistress, and through it, by a back passage, into the neighbouring woods. For this ready aid, the unfortunate girl was seized next day, by William de Heslope, the English sheriff, and, with inhuman cruelty, condemned and executed. But Wallace's revenge, when he heard of her unmerited fate, was as rapid as it was stern. That very night he collected thirty faithful and powerful partisans, who, entering the town when all were in their beds, reached the sheriff's lodging in silence.* It was a room or loft, constructed,

* "And quhare that he wyst the Schyrrave
Oysed hys Innys for til have,
In-til a loft quhare that he lay,
Efter mydnycht before day," &c.
WYNTON, vol. ii. p. 94.

like most of the buildings of those times, of wood, and communicating with the street by a high stair. Up this Wallace rushed at midnight, and, beating down the door, presented himself in full armour, and with his naked weapon, before the affrighted officer, who asked him whence he came, or who he was? "I am William Wallace," he replied, "whose life you sought yesterday; and now thou shalt answer me for my poor maiden's death." With these words, he seized his naked victim by the throat, and, passing his sword through his body, cast the bleeding wretch down the stair into the street, where he was immediately slain. He then collected his soldiers, and, as the stir and tumult arose, drew off through the streets into the woods which surrounded the town.*

Merited as this revenge was then considered by all who smarted under the yoke of the English, it was justly pronounced by the government an audacious murder, and not only drew after it the usual consequences of proscription and outlawry, but incited to an immediate and eager pursuit. Wallace, however, was intimately acquainted with the country, and found little difficulty in defeating every effort for his apprehension. It was from this period that we must date his systematic and determined resistance to England; for the same incident which convinced him that there must for ever be an irreparable breach between him and the government which he had outraged, awakened a feeling of his own strength, gave an energetic consistency to his future life, and con-

* Wynton, vol. ii. p. 95. Fordun, vol. ii. p. 170.

centrated his love of liberty and his animosity against his oppressors into one deep and continuous principle. "It was from this time, therefore," says an ancient historian, "that all who were of bitter mind, and who had become weary of the servitude which was imposed by the domination of the English, flocked to this brave man like bees to their swarm, and he became their leader."*

For this he was eminently qualified, not only by the moral qualities of undaunted courage, by a genius naturally sagacious and fertile in expedients, and a readiness of eye, and retentiveness of memory, which seized the features and localities of a country, and kept them for future use, but by physical powers, which, even after making allowance for the exaggeration of his countrymen, appear to have been greater than those allotted to the strongest men in a warlike age. "He was," says Fordun, "of a tall and almost gigantic stature, broad-shouldered, and large-boned, with long and muscular arms, yet thin in the flanks, and unencumbered by much flesh or fat round the reins; of an open and cheerful countenance and gracious address, though sometimes, under the influence of rage and passion, fearful to look on. In his skill and address in all warlike exercises, he was," continues the same author, "equal to the

* Fordun, vol. ii. 172. Wynton, vol. ii. p. 95.

"Fra he thus the Schyrreive slewe
Scottis men fast til him drewe,
That wyth the Inglis oft time ware
Aggrevyd and supprysyd sare.
And this Williame thai made thare
Owre them cheftane and leddare."

most accomplished knights of his time; and nature seems to have liberally endowed him with all the qualities which were calculated to conciliate the affection of his followers, and to ensure him popularity with the people; in distributing the wealth and plunder which fell into his hands, he was singularly generous; in visiting offences, just, and ready to forgive; in tribulation or distress, patient, sympathizing, and unselfish. The only thing he never could forgive, was falsehood and treachery, and in the punishment of these, he would at times evince a stern and inexorable cruelty, which tarnished his character. Yet, in the life that he led, and surrounded by the broken and desperate men whom he at first commanded, the principle of honour and good faith to each other could alone perhaps be maintained by the certainty of punishment. It must be recollected also, that he existed in that dark and iron age, when the feudal feeling of revenge, at all times esteemed a laudable motive of action, was exalted into a sacred virtue, hallowed by the cause in which it was exerted, and the hope that it would ultimately lead to the re-establishment of the independence of the country."

There can be little doubt, that for a considerable period after this adventure at Lanark, Wallace and his men lived by plunder, retreating, when pursued, to the woods and fastnesses, from which they again issued to attack the convoys and foraging parties of the English. In these excursions, the scarcity of food to which they were often reduced, rendered it a matter of necessity that they should not encumber themselves

with prisoners, and all the soldiers who fell into their hands were instantly put to death—the arms and harness which they wore, and the stores of flour, wine, or other provisions which they were accompanying to the different castles and garrisons, being immediately appropriated to the use of the band, and divided by Wallace with a liberality which left little or nothing for himself. On other occasions, where they were either unsuccessful in their attacks, or too small in numbers to venture against the enemy, the chase afforded them a livelihood, whilst the skins and furs of the animals which they slew, supplied them with clothing against the inclemency of a cold and damp country, and with warm bedding and carpeting for the caves and rocky retreats where they concealed their plunder and had their only home.

An adventurous and romantic existence like this, possessed the highest charms for those who had fled from the face of the conqueror, into the strong and solitary retreats, where they might escape from the necessity of swearing homage to Edward; and Wallace found that his little troop of partisans were daily increasing at so rapid a rate, that he would soon be able to take the field in a more open and determined manner. In the meantime, his smaller expeditions continued, and the mode of life he led was well adapted to mature, in himself and his soldiers, those qualities which were likely to ensure success. To him it gave the habit of command over fierce and unruly spirits, an intimate knowledge of the country, a fertility in warlike expedients, and that confidence in his own powers and resources, which was attended

with cheerfulness and collectedness of mind under the most untoward events; to them it imparted correspondent habits of prompt obedience—it accustomed them to rapid marches, to patience under the extremities of fatigue, cold, and hunger, to a devoted attachment to their chief, to a contempt for an enemy, whom, although in small and straggling parties, they daily defeated, and to that happy principle in soldiers, which, under the direction of an able leader, is an almost certain prelude of success—a belief, that whatever duty he allots them, they are able to perform.

About this time, a desire to become acquainted with the strength and resources of the English, often induced Wallace to assume various disguises, and, under their protection, to mingle with their soldiers, to visit the towns in which their garrisons were stationed, and to frequent the market places, where he was likely to acquire information which might assist him in his own plans. On other occasions, when he was accustomed rapidly to remove his head-quarters from one district of the country to another, and was little known, he scrupled not to enter the towns in his common dress, with a short dagger or knife at his girdle, and a staff or hunting pole in his hand, or openly to pursue the amusements of the chase, attended by a few followers, in the usual style of a smaller baron or Scottish gentleman. This temerity, it may be believed, led, not unfrequently, to personal encounters, which have afforded ample room for the amusing and exaggerated descriptions of Harry the Minstrel. The account of the early

career of Wallace, as it has reached us in more authentic history, gives, however, a degree of probability to some of the wildest of these adventures. His animosity against the English made him rash; his great personal strength, exceedingly confident; and to slay a buckler-player at Ayr, to attack and put to flight a party of soldiers who attempted to rob him of his day's sport, as he fished on Irvine water, to brain an angry steward of Henry Percy, or repay the rudeness of the squire Longcastle, by a mortal thrust in the throat with his dagger, were exactly such incidents as we might expect from the situation in which Wallace was then placed. Much as he trusted in his great personal strength, he usually, it seems, took the precaution to wear a light coat of mail under his common clothes, so that when he travelled through the country, and mingled with the English, apparently unarmed, he was yet ready for battle, and provided against sudden attack. He wore a habergeon under his gown or mantle; his bonnet, which, to common sight, was nothing more than a cap of cloth or velvet, had a steel basnet concealed under it; a collar, or neck-piece, of the same metal, fitted him so closely, that it was hid completely by his doublet; and below his gloves, which, to those who stood by, seemed merely leather or cloth, he took care to have strong gauntlets of plate.* We are not, therefore, to be astonished at his confidence in exposing himself, thus provided, in the midst of his enemies, or at the successful result in which most of his early personal

* Jamieson's "Wallace," b. iii. l. 85.

encounters appear to have concluded, when they, who, trusting to their numbers, ventured to insult or assail him, found, that instead of a quiet traveller, clad in the "summer weeds of peace," to use an expressive phrase of his biographer the Minstrel, they had to do with an assailant in full armour, and of extraordinary personal strength. In these, his extreme bravery, his hair-breadth escapes, and knightly prowess, commanded the admiration of the people; and events, at first not very far above the common experience of mankind, exaggerated by credulity, reached, and sometimes overstepped, the borders of the marvellous.

But it is time to turn from these details, to more important history.—In the spring of the year 1297, a few months after Edward had completed what he esteemed his final settlement of the government, Wallace appears to have commenced his military operations upon a greater scale. The people were now suffering grievously from famine; the unsettled condition of the land, the ravages of war, and the insecurity of property, had interrupted the labours of agriculture; and the English garrisons were supplied by provisions from England, which, in convoys of numerous waggons, and under the protection of strong parties of soldiers, traversed the different roads of the country. We have seen that the command of the county and castle of Ayr had been committed by Edward to Henry Percy,* and it appears that the famine had nowhere fallen with

* Rotuli Scotiæ, vol. i. p. 31.

heavier weight than upon this district. To relieve this distress, which began to be grievously felt by the English garrison of Ayr, Percy had ordered supplies from Carlisle, and a large train of waggons, under the protection of John de Fenwick, an English officer of great courage and experience, took their journey from that city to Ayr. Of this Wallace was informed, as he lay with his little band on Mauchline Muir, and although he could then only muster about fifty soldiers, yet he determined to attack it. For this purpose he marched to Loudon, and, late in the evening, occupied a strong position within a wood, where he threw up a temporary fortification, and passed the night. In the grey dawn of the morning, he and his men, leaving their horses, occupied a narrow valley through which it was necessary for the convoy to pass, and they were soon informed by their "outskirrers," that Fenwick, at the head of a force which greatly outnumbered them, was pressing forward to Loudon Hill, he himself commanding the advance, whilst another officer, named Beaumont, brought up the rear. On coming up, Fenwick, confident in his own numbers, did not doubt for a moment that he could force the pass; but he was soon convinced of his error. Impeded by the very superiority to which he trusted, and encumbered by the long train of waggons and carriages, he was thrown into irrecoverable confusion, and the Scots, after a great slaughter, made themselves masters of the whole convoy, which, besides ample supplies of wine, flour, and forage, included two hundred horses, and a considerable plunder in arms

and accoutrements.* In the encounter, Fenwick, after being unhorsed by Wallace, was slain by Robert Boyd, a baron of Cunningham, in Ayrshire, who had joined his party; and the fugitives carried to Percy an exaggerated picture of the numbers and audacity of the enemy, now in possession of all the provisions and stores, to the arrival of which he had been so anxiously looking forward. Immediately after this discomfiture, Sir Ranald Crawford, the uncle of the Scottish leader, was summoned to Glasgow by Henry Percy, who expressed an anxious desire that he would use his influence with his nephew Wallace, to induce him to renounce his opposition to the English government, and come under the peace of the king. Crawford, the sheriff of Ayr, had himself submitted to Edward, under the idea that resistance was hopeless. He acceded, accordingly, to the request of the English baron, and sought out Wallace in the forest of Clyde, to which he had driven the carriages and plunder taken from Fenwick, and where he and his men then held their rural camp. When Crawford approached, he found them leading a life, which it was not wonderful should have charms for young and adventurous spirits. Their table was spread under the summer shade of the forest oaks; it was covered with the wine and victuals intended for Percy and his garrison; the chase, besides, had furnished them with venison, and around their booths and tents hung their weapons and harness, their hunting spears and

* The memory of this defeat still survives in the tradition of the country. Statistical Account of Scotland, vol. ii. p. 74.

bugles.* To many, such a way of life had the strongest attractions, and the very peril with which it was accompanied enhanced them so, that although warmly and affectionately welcomed, the arguments of his uncle made but a feeble impression upon Wallace and his followers: if they consented to a truce, which is doubtful, it was broken within a very short time, and their operations against the enemy resumed with vigour.

Encouraged by his first successes, the Scottish leader continued to attack the convoys, and infest the English quarters; and the multitudes of the armed vassals and stout tenantry who flocked to his party rendering the concealment and security of the wilder districts less necessary, he marched more openly over the country, and became known to his enemies and his countrymen, not as the bold and reckless outlaw, who supported by plunder a rash and precarious existence, but as a formidable and fortunate chief, whose military talents were of a high order,—who could bring into the field, upon any great emergency, a force of strong and warlike soldiers, inured to battle, and formidable to the government. In consequence of such growing reputation, Wallace was joined at this time by many of those Scottish barons, who, under the fear of confiscation or imprisonment, had consented to take the oath of homage, and who now availed themselves of the first opportunity of reviving hope to renounce its fetters.

Nor was there wanting a just and legitimate

* Jamieson's edition of "Wallace," b. iii. l. 315.

ground for such conduct. In his transactions with Scotland, and his treatment of Baliol and his subjects, the English monarch had violated the stipulations of the treaty of Brigham, in reliance upon which the Estates and community of Scotland had suffered him to interfere as an umpire in the settlement of the succession,—he had goaded the sovereign, and outraged the people, into rebellion,—he had invaded and wasted by fire and sword the country which he was bound to protect and to cherish; and an oath of homage and allegiance, administered and taken under the immediate fear of death and confiscation, could, by no principle of law and justice, be regarded as a permanent obligation. It was without any tarnish, therefore, upon his feudal honour, that Sir Andrew Moray, Lord of Bothwell, nearly connected by marriage with the potent family of Comyn, Lord of Badenoch, now brought the accession of his name and retainers to the party of Wallace. A still more powerful ally soon joined him in the person of William, Lord of Douglas, who had commanded in the castle of Berwick when it was taken by Edward in 1296. Douglas had early been known to Edward as a baron of great power and intrepidity. He had not scrupled to cast into his dungeon in Douglas Castle, the officers of Baliol, who attempted to execute the orders of the king; he had seized and carried off Eleanor de Ferrers, a ward of the English crown, and possessed himself of her fortune by marriage; and after his surrender at Berwick, he appears to have lived in a compulsory submission to England, till the reputation and success of Wallace induced him to

assemble his vassals, and unite his fortunes to that intrepid leader.

They had not been long together, when intelligence was brought that Ormesby, the English justiciar, in his progress through the kingdom, had arrived in Perth, and was about to hold his court at Scone. Wallace, with the assistance of Douglas, and his men-at-arms, instantly resolved to attack him; and such was the silence and celerity of their march, that the English troops were dispersed and cut to pieces, the officers who kept the doors of the court slain in their civil robes, and the travelling equipage and furniture, the carriages, horses, and money chest of this high dignitary, the second in the kingdom, seized and secured, when Ormesby scarcely knew that he was attacked, and before he could organize the slightest resistance. It was, indeed, with the greatest difficulty that he himself escaped, accompanied by a few attendants, and leaving every thing which he possessed in the hands of the enemy.* At the time of this spirited enterprise, Warenne, Earl of Surrey, the guardian, and Hugh de Cressingham, the treasurer, were both out of the kingdom, so that by the flight of Ormesby, the justiciar, the English government was greatly weakened; and many other barons, encouraged by the example of Douglas, renounced, like him, their extorted oaths of allegiance, and joined the party of Wallace. Of these, the most illustrious was James, the High Steward of Scotland, a baron of great power, who possessed estates in the

* Walsingham, p. 70. Knighton, p. 2513.

counties of Edinburgh, Lanark, Ayr, Berwick, Forfar, and Rokesburgh.* Along with him came Sir John Stewart of Bonkyl, his brother; and these brought with them not only their numerous retainers and armed tenantry, but many of the lesser chiefs, who were dependent upon the family, and fought under their banner. It was about this time, also, that he received an important accession in the support of Wisheart, Bishop of Glasgow, a prelate of great political talent, although, in his subsequent career, of rather versatile allegiance; whilst Sir Alexander de Lindesay and Sir Richard Lundin, at the head of their vassals, came forward to strengthen the cause of independence.

The plan of operations which Wallace now adopted was calculated to make the most of the accession of these new adherents, and, at the same time, it risked as little as possible the occurrence of any great defeat, which might have the effect of destroying the reviving hopes of his party. In the district where his estates lay, each baron could command a small force of his own vassals, and with this it was his business to harass and attack the English in their foraging parties, to intercept the convoys on the road to their different garrisons, and to watch for the moment when any remissness on the part of their enemies gave them an opportunity of making themselves masters of the castles which they held, or of cutting off the detachments sent from England to relieve them. With these different chiefs,

* Rotuli Scotiæ, vol. i. p. 30.

who, although they submitted to his directions, acted in independent bodies, and in various parts of the country, at a distance from each other, Wallace, by means of the lower classes, who were all on his side, maintained a constant and rapid communication; and on any great emergency, or when an opportunity of attack presented itself, wherein the presence of a larger force than he himself commanded was likely to ensure success, it was not long before he was certain of the arrival of the reinforcements which he required. When his object was gained, they again dispersed, and, on reaching their own districts, recommenced their more desultory operations against the enemy. Such a mode of warfare had many advantages. It established various points of resistance and open rebellion throughout the country, which distracted the English government, divided their attention, weakened their disposable force, and gave to the Scots some leader in almost every county in the south, under whom the brave and adventurous spirits who were ready to rise, might at once enlist themselves; it prevented Wallace from exercising his supreme command in too constant and rigorous a manner over barons, whose feudal pride was easily hurt, and who regarded him as inferior in rank to themselves; and it relieved the country from the maintenance of a large army, which could not possibly have been kept long together, without experiencing great distress, and calling for sacrifices upon the part of the lower classes, which, by the pressure of individual want, might have produced an indisposition to the cause of resistance.

In this plan of operations, the first important advantage seems to have been a spirited and successful stratagem of William Douglas against the castle of Sanquhar, a place of considerable strength in the county of Dumfries, and commanded by an English captain named Beaufort. The Scottish lord found means to corrupt a countryman, whose common duty it was to supply the garrison with fuel, and this man having consented to lend his dress and his carts for the purpose, Thomas Dickson, a bold and trusty retainer of Douglas, threw the coarse frock over his armour, and covering his steel basnet with a bonnet, which completed his disguise, drove his carts across the drawbridge, and beneath the portcullis, in such a way that it was impossible for the garrison to lower the iron door. When all was thus ready, Dickson cast away his disguise, stabbed the porter at the gate, and sounding his horn as a signal to Douglas, who lay with his men in ambush at a short distance, that chief rushed in, and made himself master of the castle, putting the whole garrison to the sword. That system, pursued afterwards so successfully by Bruce, of destroying and rendering untenable the various fortresses which fell into his hands, was not adopted at this time by Wallace and his party; and Douglas, having imprudently shut himself up in this stronghold, was soon after beleaguered by a force which the English sent from the neighbouring castles of Tibermuir and Disdeir. He succeeded, however, in communicating information of his distress to Wallace, who at this time lay with his men in the mountainous district of the

Lennox, and instantly marched to his relief, accompanied by Sir John Graham of Dundaff, who afterwards fell at the battle of Falkirk. Upon the approach of the Scots, the English drew off from before Sanquhar, but Wallace was in time to attack the rear of their division in the wood of Dalswinton, and to cut off from the main body a party of five hundred men, who were put to the sword. He then relieved Douglas; and as he found himself in a hostile district, where the Comyns, who still belonged to the party of Edward, held the chief sway,* he removed to a situation more favourable for his operations.

In the darkness of authentic history at this period, and guided only by the confused chronology of the Minstrel, and the uncertain glimmer of tradition, it is exceedingly difficult to discover the real events which took place. It is clear, however, from the evidence of the English historians, that the successes of the Scots gave the most serious alarm to the captains and governors of Edward; that Disdeir, another castle of great strength, fell into the hands of Douglas; and that, under the encouragement of the prelate of Glasgow, and the High Steward and his brother, the spirit of insurrection became so popular, and spread so rapidly, that great numbers of the English were openly massacred in almost every district beyond the Frith of Forth, then denominated the Scottish Sea. "Having collected together their whole force," says Knighton, a contemporary English historian, who received his information from eye-

* Statistical Account of Scotland, vol. ii. p. 32.

witnesses of the transactions, " they no longer kept to the woods, but openly marched through the country, cruelly slaying every Englishman whom they could lay hands on beyond the Scottish sea, and afterwards attacking the fortresses and castles."*

At the same period, Wallace commenced a severe persecution of the English ecclesiastics who had possessed themselves of Scottish livings, and employed their wealth and influence in intriguing against the independence of the country. It had been early ordered by Edward, that all parishes which fell vacant in Scotland should be filled by persons of English birth; so that many of the richest livings, stalls, and deaneries, were occupied by intruders, who could not fail to be peculiarly obnoxious to the insurgents. Against these foreign clerks, an edict of banishment had been passed under the brief government of Baliol; but the subsequent reduction of the country by the English monarch, restored them to the livings and dignities from which they had been ejected, and once more filled the land with the willing agents of the conqueror. Under such circumstances, it was perfectly natural for Wallace to revive the edict of Baliol; but this measure appears to have been carried into execution with an ingenuity of cruelty which painfully marks the intensity of the national hatred, and the occasional ferocity of the chief. " From this time forth," says Knighton, " they seized every ecclesiastic whom they could find, and after expelling them from their houses,

* Knighton, p. 2514.

made a public mock of their misery, reserving their tortures to fill up their intervals of sport and enjoyment. It was not uncommon for them at these times to drive before them troops of aged English priests and nuns, whose hands were bound behind their backs, to prevent the possibility of escape, and whilst the brutal soldiery and their hard-hearted leaders sat on the bridges which crossed their rapid rivers, the unhappy wretches were either cast down headlong, or compelled to precipitate themselves into the stream, whilst their drowning agonies were the subject of savage amusement and derision. Amongst these victims, two canons of St Andrews, who were dragged trembling before the robber Wallace, as he stood upon the bridge of St Johnston's, made a wonderful escape from the very jaws of death; for, as he was on the point of pronouncing their sentence, he was suddenly interrupted by the arrival of messengers from the Scottish nobles, and, breaking off, he commanded them to be kept in custody. Their friends afterwards interceded for them, so that, on payment of a high ransom, they were permitted instantly to leave the kingdom, under a solemn oath never again to pass the Borders. One of these unfortunate men," adds the historian, "remained for some time at Gysborne, and with his own lips described to me the danger from which he had escaped."* Others were not so fortunate: we learn from the same writer, that when Wallace and his soldiers had stormed St Andrews, three Englishmen who had

* Knighton, p. 2514. Triveti Annales, vol. i. p. 299.

settled there, probably for the purposes of trade, amid the sack and slaughter which ensued, fled to the Needle of St Andrew, a sharp-pointed rock, or column, which conferred the privilege of sanctuary on any one who touched it. The fury of the soldiery, however, could not be restrained by the holiness of the spot, and the defenceless victims were immolated on the rock of refuge.*

The truth seems to be, that the character and actions of this extraordinary man were in all respects colossal. His crimes as well as his virtues evolved themselves on a great scale; he himself and his nation had been crushed under the intolerable weight of an unjust system of government, till, from a desire not only to avenge the blood of friends and countrymen, but to strike terror into the hearts of the oppressors, and to impress upon them the conviction that nothing short of their utter extermination was intended, retaliation in its most cruel shape was sometimes not only permitted, but encouraged, by this formidable leader. To expect in a mind like his, bred up in a dark and iron age, and perpetually exposed to the hardening influence of the saddest sights of war, the refined benevolence and the gentler virtues of peace, would be unreasonable and absurd; and it is quite evident, notwithstanding the unmingled eulogies of his minstrel biographer, and the enthusiastic sophistry of later writers, that Wallace, in the great struggle to which he had devoted himself, despised and trampled upon the artificial refinements of chivalry. He saw

* Knighton, p. 2515.

many of the higher barons and nobles of his own land, whilst they affected to be the models of brave and accomplished knights, leaguing themselves, without shame or compunction, under the party of England against the liberty of their country, and leaving the defence of the national independence to the lower classes of their vassals or tenantry, whom they deemed utterly unworthy of any high or knightly distinctions. It was exclusively through the assistance of these despised orders that Wallace had for a long time kept up his almost hopeless struggle; from those knightly models of every thing that was brave and generous, he had as yet received little assistance, and frequent opposition—and in the cautious and selfish characters of some who had already joined him, his discernment had detected the incipient timidity, which, under any reverse of fortune or disappointment of preferment, would be sure to prompt absolute desertion. It was impossible for him not to despise alike such men, and the system of observances under which they had been educated. His soul was devoted to a far simpler worship, that of Liberty: at the horns of her altar he was eager not only to slay every invader of his country, but, with a rude and savage pleasantry, which seems to have formed a peculiar feature in his character, to trample upon all refined generosity, and high-wrought sensibility and humanity, which, no doubt, appeared to him utterly misplaced and absurd with regard to the mortal enemies of Scotland. It is here that we are to remark the decided difference between the characters of Wallace and Bruce: the latter, throughout his

whole career, never losing or outraging for a moment the feelings of a chivalrous and accomplished knight: Wallace, on the contrary, approaching far nearer to the model of an old Roman in the stern days of the republic, who knew only two great motives of action—the love of his country, and the hatred of her enemies.

But for these excesses of cruelty into which he was sometimes led, he was not free from deep compunction; and the feeling of remorse, in a mind full of the dark superstitions of the age, and stained by frequent and recent blood, assumed a very marked and terrible character. Of this an extraordinary example occurred about this time. Wallace had been successful in an attack upon Kinclaven Castle,—a fortress, of which the ruins are still to be seen on the ground near the confluence of the rivers Tay and Isla; the whole garrison were put to the sword, and after having removed from it the arms, the harness, wearing apparel, provisions, and a large sum of money which was found in the military chest, the castle itself was destroyed by fire, and the plunder removed to the Shortwood Shaws, an extensive forest in the neighbourhood. Some time previous to this the Scottish leader had been joined by an adventurer named Faudon, a man of a reserved and melancholy character, with whose history neither he nor any of his soldiers were acquainted, but whose strength and courage made him a useful, though unpleasant associate. So far as it had been tried, his fidelity could not be seriously impeached, but his temper was fierce and sullen; he uniformly shunned any intimate communica-

tion with his fellows, and the mystery in which he involved himself, at times awakened suspicions which were not easily repressed. This gloomy man formed one of the party which now lay with Wallace in the Shortwood Forest; and amidst the revels and merriment which succeeded their successful attack upon Kinclaven, and from which, as was his custom, he kept far aloof, a sudden alarm was given that they were surrounded by a large body of the English. It is not improbable, that at this moment a suspicion of Faudon darted into the mind of Wallace; but no time was given him to arrive at the truth, for they immediately found themselves in presence of a force of the enemy, led by Butler and Loreyn, two of Edward's captains, and so superior in numbers, that it was impossible to meet them in an open field. The Scots, however, during their retreat in Shortwood Forest, had employed themselves in the construction of a species of rude fortification, composed of the trunks of trees, driven deep into the ground, with the interstices filled up with boards and wattled boughs; within the square enclosures formed by these woodland walls, they defended themselves for some time; but, after a great portion of his men had been slain, Wallace, with a few followers, amongst whom was the melancholy Faudon, were compelled to fly towards the neighbouring wood of Gask, followed hotly by the English, who had let loose a sleuth or blood hound upon the traces of the fugitives. The soldiers, at this moment, were mostly worn out and wounded; Wallace himself, though fresher than the rest, was in a

state of fierce excitement, produced by anger and disappointment, and every moment they were ready to be overtaken. At this crisis, when the delay of a few minutes might have been perfectly fatal, Faudon, bleeding and exhausted by his wounds, refused to move farther. Wallace flew back to where he stood, sullenly declaring his resolution to remain. A moment was spent in kind entreaty, the next in remonstrance, and ere the third expired, the sword of Wallace, who was worked up to a paroxysm of fury and suspicion, descended on the neck of the unhappy wretch, and at one blow severed his head from his body. Scarcely, however, had this unjustifiable vengeance been executed, when the chief experienced that revulsion of remorse and pity which was natural to a generous mind surprised by passion; and, although the near baying of the hound proclaimed the imminency of the danger, he would have remained upon the spot, had not his soldiers insisted that he should provide for his safety. At their entreaty, he pressed forward; the sleuth-hound was checked by the blood which welled from the dead body of Faudon, and the party gained the forest of Gask, where they completely eluded the pursuit of their enemies. In the midst of the wood there was a ruined castle, in one of the deserted chambers of which they were well contented to take up their lodging for the night. A fire was kindled, a sheep, taken from a fold hard by, slain and roasted, and Wallace, who had only thirteen men now left with him, and these much exhausted, commanded them to go to sleep, whilst he watched.

At this trying moment, in the stillness and solemnity of midnight, feverish and exhausted, yet compelled to watch, and conscious that he was surrounded by his enemies, his mind sunk into despondency, and his fit of remorse and anguish again seized him with more violent paroxysms than before. As he trimmed the decaying fire, or busied himself in cleaning his weapons, he started back from the sight of his hands; they were still red with the blood, not of his enemies, but of one of his own soldiers, who had steadily served him, till, exhausted by wounds, his strength, and not his faith, had failed. If such was his conduct to so tried a man as Faudon, what confidence could his soldiers have in a leader of so fierce and vindictive a disposition; what security could he have in himself, if the dying remonstrances and feeble appeal of a brave soldier, mortally wounded in his cause, had failed to stem the torrent of his blind and furious passion? But a few hours before, and there was not one of the hardy partisans who now lay around him, but would have willingly sacrificed life in his service; but now, which of them would do this for a leader who so lightly regarded their perils and privations; who, on the slightest symptom, not of willing, but of involuntary disobedience, was ready, in the ruthlessness of his discipline, to become their executioner? All these miserable reflections rushed rapidly through the mind of Wallace, as his men disposed themselves to rest; and his imagination seems to have been worked up to a state of morbid excitement, which was increased by the awfulness of night, and the lonely habitation in which he found himself. Sud-

denly, however, he was awakened from this miserable reverie by the loud blast of a horn, which sounded on the outside of the castle, and startled his soldiers from their slumbers. One of these immediately ran into the forest to ascertain the cause of the alarm; he did not return, however. Two of his companions being sent to make the same enquiry, were detained, like him, by some unseen enemy; and Wallace, becoming greatly alarmed, dispatched one messenger after another, to bring him intelligence, till he was left alone in the ruined hall. The blast now grew louder and more terrible, and, with his sword in his hand, he rushed to the door of the apartment, but his retreat was here cut off by a dreadful vision. The ghastly figure of Faudon, holding his own head by the hair, confronted him in the entry, and as he started back in horror, the spectre cast the gory missile at his murderer. Wallace, unconscious of what he did, yet mechanically brave, caught it by the clotted locks, and was about to assault the spectre, but next moment, under the terror that he was in the presence of a spirit or a fiend, he leapt from the window of the hall, and fled far into the wood. There, in an agony of despair, and overcome by a secret upbraiding, that his cruelty and his crime had caused him to be deserted by Heaven, and abandoned to the persecution of the Evil One, he cast himself on the earth, and uttered the most bitter lamentations, when a sudden light shone through the dark forest, and, starting up, he saw the deserted castle of Gask blazing in one wide conflagration, and the figure of Faudon, with a beam, or rafter.

in his hand, standing on the wall, relieved upon the white sheet of flame, and superintending the work of destruction.* Upon this Wallace betook himself to prayer, and as the morning broke, he was joined by Stephen of Irèland, with whom he soon after rejoined his friends; and having collected the scattered relics of his party, he united them to Sir John the Graham, and resumed his operations against the enemy. In this singular adventure, which it is easy to account for on natural causes, we recognise the influence of remorse and superstition working upon a generous mind, naturally powerful, but bred up in that belief of supernatural agencies, and disembodied spirits, which was cordially embraced in those remote periods, and which is scarcely altogether eradicated in our own.

It was one great advantage of the system pursued by Wallace, that these insulated and temporary reverses did not materially injure the cause. If one little party was dispersed or cut off, the various friends and leaders who had joined the insurrection, and whose forces were scattered over different districts in the country, soon found means to repair the loss by re-uniting themselves; and the chief, whose undaunted courage and indefatigable spirit animated their resistance, at the moment the English believed him reduced to the last extremity, re-appeared in another quarter at the head of fresh levies, and became more formidable than before. Accordingly, about this time, we find that a general union of the forces of all the revolted barons,

* Jamieson's "Wallace," b. v. pp. 72, 73.

took place in Ayrshire. Douglas, the High Steward, and his brother, Alexander de Lindesay, Sir Andrew Moray of Bothwell, Sir Richard Lundin, and Wishart, the Bishop of Glasgow, were the chief amongst this number; and they soon after received an important ally in the younger Bruce, Earl of Carrick, whose estates, extending nearly from the Clyde to the Solway, enabled him to bring into the field a more numerous body of armed vassals, than almost any baron in Scotland. Hitherto, the northern insurrection seems to have been little noticed by the English monarch, who was occupied with his affairs in France, and intent upon an expedition to Flanders. It had now, however, proceeded so far as to demand his most serious attention; and being unable to repair thither in person, he sent Anthony Beck, the warlike Bishop of Durham, to report as to the real state of the country;* and commanded the Earl of Surrey, who was guardian, or lieutenant of Scotland, to summon the whole fighting men north of the Trent, and instantly reduce the rebels. Surrey, an old man, in infirm health, proceeded rather slowly in executing these orders; but he dispatched his nephew, Henry Percy, at the head of an army of forty thousand foot, and three thousand armed horse, who passed into Scotland, directing his march through Annandale to the castle of Lochmaben. The Bishop of Durham, in the meantime, at the head of that splendid and powerful body of knights and retainers who generally accompanied him, pressed forward to Glasgow,

* Knighton, p. 2515.

where he fixed his head-quarters, whilst Percy, with the main army, advanced more leisurely.

At this period occurred that dreadful transaction, known in Scottish history by the title of the Burning of the Barns of Ayr, concerning the exact particulars of which, amid the abundant credulity of one set of writers, and the absolute scepticism of another, it is difficult to discover the truth. The existence, however, of some authentic muniments, and the admissions of the contemporary English historians, confirm, to a certain degree, in this portion of his narrative, the account of the Minstrel, and authorize us to adopt at least its more general features. Whilst Percy was at a distance from his government of Galloway, and Bishop Beck lay at Glasgow, a temporary truce had, it appears, been entered into between Wallace, and the English officers who held the chief command in their absence; and, under the colour of treating of peace, Sir Ranald Crawford, the uncle of our hero, Sir Brice the Blair, a baron of ancient lineage, who had joined his party, along with Sir Niel Montgomery, and other Scottish lords, were induced to attend the council of the English, which was held in a large wooden building, or barn, near the town of Ayr. Each of these Scottish leaders as he entered, unarmed, and unsuspicious of any treachery, was seized, and hurried to instant execution; and, as the precaution had been taken to fill the building with a large force of English soldiers, whilst all without appeared fair and honest, the horrid work was carried through in silence and security; indeed, even if the alarm had risen, the Scots would have

found it impossible to rescue their companions. It is impossible to condemn too severely this nefarious transaction. On a broad joist, or rafter, which supported the roof, the Scottish barons who had attended the council, under the solemn protection of a truce, were hanged, without one being suffered to escape; and Wallace, who had himself nearly fallen into the snare, found his party deprived, in a single day, of some of the dearest and bravest of his friends and companions. But enough were left him to take ample revenge; and the Black Parliament of Ayr (the name given to this fatal council, in which the Scottish leaders had perished) was succeeded by a scene still more terrible. Coming suddenly by night to the neighbourhood of Ayr, at the head of three hundred men, he discovered, by the information of a spy, that the English troops, overpowered by excess and sleep, were quartered in the suburbs, having taken up their lodging in the wooden houses, of which the towns in Scotland were then entirely composed. Favoured by the darkness of the night, and the state in which he found his enemy, Wallace had time to heap up a quantity of pitch and dry wood around the buildings, and to fasten the doors on the outside, without alarming the victims whom he had devoted to destruction. So deliberately had the plan been executed, that the doors of those houses in which the strangers lodged had been marked by the spy, to distinguish them from the houses of his own countrymen; and, having drawn his men round the spot, so that none should escape, the chief now commanded the fire to be applied, and in a few moments the

whole quarters were enveloped in one fierce and undistinguished blaze. Of all the English, who had so lately triumphed in the death of their enemies, not a man escaped; all either were slain by the soldiers of Wallace, as they rushed from the doors, or perished by throwing themselves from the windows, or met a more terrible death in the midst of the flames; and the Scottish leader, having offered up this human hecatomb to the souls of his dear companions who had perished at Ayr, collected his forces, and retiring from the scene of these shocking events, awaited the advance of Percy. In the meantime, however, before this baron should form a junction with Anthony Beck, he determined to dislodge this prelate from the ecclesiastical palace of Glasgow, which he then occupied, and which belonged to his friend and ally, Bishop Wishart. A rapid march soon brought him in sight of the city, and having divided his little force, of three hundred cavalry, into two bodies, he is said, with that rude pleasantry which he often indulged in before battle, to have directed the leader of the first to "bear up the bishop's tail, or attack him in the rear, while he himself, who was yet unbishoped, or unconfirmed, proposed to ask his blessing, by charging him in the front." These dispositions were carried into execution with complete success; and the knights, and household of the English prelate, after a desperate resistance, were dislodged, with great slaughter, from their quarters, whilst he himself, with the utmost difficulty, escaped at the head of a few horse.

But the same success which attended Wallace,

did not wait upon the more feeble councils of the allied Scottish barons, amongst whom the near approach of Percy called into full action that fatal spirit of jealousy and disunion which had already betrayed itself in their unwillingness to take the field. It is not difficult, even in the very imperfect and rapid details of these transactions as they appear in the English historians, to detect, at this time, the operations of two parties in the Scottish army—the one bold, resolute, and active, the other weak and timid in the extreme —the first led by Wallace, and composed of his own hardy soldiers, inured to war, and obstinate in their purpose of resistance—the other, including the feudal retainers of the barons, whose united force, although inferior in cavalry, far outnumbered in infantry the army of Percy.

As the English baron, on his march towards Ayr, lay encamped for the night in a small village in Annandale, beside Lochmaben Castle,* his quarters were suddenly attacked by the Scots with great fury; and in the confusion and darkness, the English soldiers, unable to find their leaders, rushed blindly against each other, and either fell by their own weapons, or became an easy prey to the assailants. In this perplexity, however, they set fire to the wooden sheds in which they had passed the night; and as the conflagration blazed wide and bright over the fields, they saved themselves by the light under their various banners, and easily repulsed the enemy, which, it is probable, consisted solely of the soldiers of Wal-

* Walter Hemingford, vol. i. p. 122.

lace. In the morning, Percy advanced to Ayr, where he was met by the intelligence, that the great body of the Scots were encamped within two miles' distance. At break of day, therefore, he struck his tents, and proceeded in order of battle against them; but from the spirit which now infected the army, there was little need for such warlike preparation. All was in confusion and at variance. Some were jealous of Bruce, who, it was reported, had a design upon the crown; others favoured the Comyns, the heads of which powerful family, Sir John Comyn of Badenoch and the Earl of Buchan, had been liberated by Edward from their attendance upon his person, and sent into Scotland to use their efforts in reconciling their countrymen to the English government; a third party agreed with Wallace in adhering to John Baliol as their lawful sovereign, but their feudal pride refused to act under his orders, upon the ground that he was of inferior rank to themselves, and more fit to be their vassal than their commander. In such circumstances, when it appeared certain that their indecision would result in a total defeat, Sir Richard Lundin, a Scottish baron who had never taken the oath of homage to Edward, at the head of his vassals, openly rode over to the English, declaring that he thought it folly any longer to remain with a faction fatally and hopelessly divided against itself. Immediately afterwards, the Bishop of Glasgow and William de Douglas submitted themselves to Percy, under the stipulation that their lives should be spared, and their estates preserved; and Percy, with his principal officers,

agreed to a solemn meeting with the rest of the Scottish barons, at which the terms of their capitulation should be drawn up in writing, and the hostages which each was to deliver for his future fidelity should be arranged and nominated.

To these negotiations Wallace indignantly refused to become a party, and would neither concede to the enemy, nor accept for himself, any cessation of hostilities. Collecting his own followers, and joined by one solitary baron, Sir Andrew Moray of Bothwell, who, amid the universal defection, continued faithful to his country, he intently watched over the proceedings; and when Percy and the Scottish chiefs were engaged in arranging a pacification, broke in with the utmost fury upon their encampment, and put five hundred men to the sword, carrying off a great booty, and, if we may believe the English historians, behaving with a ferocity which spared neither age, nor sex, nor infancy. The enemy, however, inflicted a bloody retaliation; for coming suddenly upon the Scottish force, they repulsed them after a severe struggle, regained the plunder, and slew near a thousand men. The Earl of Carrick, William Douglas, the Bishop of Glasgow, the High Steward, and Sir Alexander de Lindesay, now made their final submission, acknowledging, in a written instrument drawn up at the time, their unnatural rebellion against their liege lord, Edward of England, and deploring the robberies, slaughters, and fire-raising which they had committed in the kingdom of Scotland, and the territory of Galloway. They were then formally admitted to the peace of the king—(in other

words, pardoned, and received into favour)—and a copy of their letter of agreement, drawn up in Norman-French, the language then generally used in the negotiations between the nobility of the two countries, was transmitted to Wallace,* who instantly sent it back with an expression of haughty contempt. He then collected his soldiers, and, accompanied alone by the knight of Bothwell, retired towards the north.

Although, however, the Scottish barons had entered into this negotiation with Percy, and had apparently separated themselves entirely from the party of Wallace, their real intentions were still hostile to the English government. It was their first object to save their estates from immediate forfeiture; but having succeeded in this, they delayed from time to time, on some frivolous pretext, the delivery of their hostages, and anxiously awaited the further progress of Wallace, holding themselves ready, on any decided success, to rejoin the insurgents. It is peculiarly unfortunate, that the silence of authentic writers has left this period of the history of so extraordinary a person exceedingly obscure. That he regarded Wishart, the Bishop of Glasgow, a man of great political ability, but of a selfish and versatile character, as the adviser of the capitulation at Irvine, is certain; for his first step after retreating from this place, was to attack with great fury the bishop's castle, to carry off his household wealth, along with his horses, his arms and armour, his nephews, and all he could meet with, whilst the

* Fœdera Angliæ, vol. ii. p. 774.

prelate himself, who had surrendered his person into the hands of Edward, was shut up in the castle of Roxburgh.* This, however, which was merely an ebullition of individual vengeance, did not interfere with his more regular operations against the English; and it would appear, from some slight indications in the papers connected with Scotland, which, under the title of the Rotuli Scotiæ, are preserved in the Tower, that about the same period when the capitulation at Irvine took place, the revolt had extended itself in an alarming manner throughout the counties of Aberdeen and Inverness. Edward, at the same time, had written in the most pressing terms to Garnet of Mar, to whom he had intrusted the defence of these northern districts, and to Henry, Bishop of Aberdeen, entreating them to be active in the suppression and in the punishment of those traitors who had slain and imprisoned his officers, and now threatened to wrest his castle of Urquhart from the hands of its English governor, William Fitz-Warenne.†

The popularity of Wallace, and his successes against the enemy, were now so rapidly increasing, that the vassals of those powerful Scottish barons who were in England with Edward, or who, in consequence of the treaty at Irvine, had withdrawn themselves from the revolt, did not scruple, in the absence of their lords, to join the banner of the Scottish chief, and his partner, Sir Andrew Moray; and Edward found that one

* Knighton, p. 2516.

† Rotuli Scotiæ, vol. i. p. 41.

of the strongest principles of the feudal system, that which binds the great body of armed retainers to follow their lord alone, was broken by the influence of patriotic feeling, and the enthusiastic admiration of so daring a leader. "He was now," says Knighton, "reinforced by an immense multitude of the Scots, so that the whole population of the country arose and followed him as their prince and commander. The persons of the nobles and barons were indeed with our king, but the whole band of their feudal retainers followed Wallace, so that their hearts were his, though their bodies remained in England."*

It is at this period that Henry the Minstrel, in his poetical account of Wallace, introduces an expedition into the wild region around Loch Awe, the object of which was to assist Sir Niel Campbell of Lochow, the ancestor of the family of Argyle, and to attack and expel an Irish chief named MacFadyan, who had been sent into this district at the head of a large body of his countrymen, and had engaged in a vain and rash attempt to reduce it under the dominion of England. It is certain, that in his expedition into Scotland in 1296, Edward was joined at Stirling by the Earl of Ulster, at the head of an army of thirty thousand Irish infantry, and four hundred armed horse;† and it is by no means improbable, that in his subsequent march into the northern counties, the King of England should have adopted the policy of leaving a large body, or colony, of these savage soldiers under the command of

* Knighton, p. 2516. † Ibid. p. 2481.

some of their native chiefs, for the purpose of reducing, or keeping under subjection, such parts of the Highland districts as evinced an indisposition to his government. According to the tradition of the country, such a mode of proceeding was adopted by Edward in the wild and romantic district lying around Loch Awe and Loch Etive, which, previous to the expedition, was under the entire dominion of the clan Campbell. In this part of Argyleshire, the English monarch stationed MacFadyan with his Kernes; and averse as the fierce inhabitants of a mountainous country are generally found, even in much later times, to the intrusion of strangers, it is easy to conceive with what bitter hostility the men of Argyle must have treated the Irish colonists, and the avidity with which they must have been ready to unite their strength with any leader who promised to expel them from the country. These feelings led to an intimate alliance between Wallace and Sir Niel Campbell, assisted by another powerful chief of the same district, commonly called Duncan of Lorn;* but these barons of Argyle, in their first attempts at resistance, were unsuccessful; and after being defeated by the Irish adventurer, Campbell was compelled to fly, with the remains of his little army, along the south side of Loch Awe, towards its eastern extremity. His intimate acquaintance with the country enabled him, in this route, to gain the narrow and precipitous pass of Brandir, communicating between Loch Awe and Loch Etive, at the bottom of which

* The head of the clan Macdowall.

runs the rapid stream of the river Awe, whilst the eastern side is defended by the rugged steeps which form the base of Ben Cruachan. Towards the northern extremity of this pass there was, in those days, a narrow wooden bridge thrown over the gulf, leading to a rocky height called Craiganuni; and the object of Campbell was to gain this stronghold, where he hoped to defend himself against the superior numbers of MacFadyan, till he had opened a communication with Wallace. In this he completely succeeded; for the Irish chief, ignorant of the localities of this wild country, and with the hope of enclosing and cutting off his enemy in the defile of Brandir, pressed eagerly forward, whilst Sir Niel gained the bridge, and after passing it in safety with his soldiers, cut down the oaken piles which formed its support, and ascending the cliffs of Craiganuni, threw the impassable torrent of the Awe between himself and his pursuers. If the station now occupied by the knight of Lochow was one of great strength and security, MacFadyan and his Kernes, worn out by their long pursuit, and in the midst of a hostile country, found themselves in very perilous circumstances. Campbell had instantly dispatched Duncan of Lorn to Wallace, informing him of the situation of the Irish army; and this experienced leader, aware of the advantage which it offered for an attack, put himself at the head of two thousand men, and along with Sir John de Graham, pressed forward with great rapidity from Stirling, entering the Highlands by Strathern. In Glendochart he was joined by Sir Niel, with three hundred stout clansmen; and having received in-

formation of the position of MacFadyan, who occupied the northern extremity of the pass of Brandir, he marched with such silence and celerity through a wide tract of moorland, denominated, in the language of the country, "Churan Beag," that he came upon the Irish chieftain before he had the least intelligence of his approach. The result of this surprise was the complete defeat, and almost extermination, of the Irish army, after a desperate resistance. The nature of the ground where the battle was fought precluded all hope from flight, so that the feeblest, driven to despair, sold their lives as dearly as they could, and the fiercest, to use an expressive phrase of the Minstrel biographer, had "eneuch of fechting." Many perished in attempting to climb the crags; two thousand were driven into the lake and drowned; whilst a few Scots, who had been compelled to join the Irish, received quarter. MacFadyan himself, with fifteen of his men, in the midst of the confusion and tumult of the battle, found means to escape to a cave, where he barricaded himself with fragments of rock, and trusted to elude discovery. His retreat, however, was found out by Duncan of Lorn, and the fierce chief, who at first defended himself with uncommon bravery, was smoked out, in the manner of a fox from his earth, and slain at the mouth of the cave, his head being afterwards fixed in savage triumph on a sharp-pointed rock, which is still known in the country by the name of the Pinnacle of MacFadyan.*

* Stat. Account of Scotland, vol. vi. p. 180. The best account of this expedition of Wallace is to be found in the

Having effected the object of his expedition, Wallace is said to have held a meeting of the Highland chiefs in the Priory of Ardchattan, the ruins of which are still to be seen on the banks of Loch Etive, where he informed them of the proceedings of the southern barons, and concerted measures for the defence of the district which he had just delivered. He then returned to the low country, and resumed his operations against the English with a success which every day brought new partisans to his banner, and inspired his soldiers with the utmost confidence of victory. Edward, in the meantime, incensed at the indolence of the Earl of Surrey, superseded him in his office of governor of Scotland, and appointed Brian Fitzalan in his stead. He at the same time recalled Henry Percy from his government of Annandale and Ayrshire, and committed it to John de Hoddleston; whilst he wrote in the most urgent terms to Cressingham, his treasurer, commanding him, if it was necessary, to drain his exchequer to the last farthing in the suppression of the Scottish rebellion. Aware, also, of the impolicy of detaining the Scottish nobles whom he had compelled to remain in England since the battle of Dunbar, whilst he received certain information that the great body of their vassals had joined themselves to Wallace, he adopted the expedient of allowing some of the most powerful amongst them to return to Scotland, under a solemn engagement that

Notes to the Bridal of Caolchairn, a poem by John Hay Allan, Esq. The reader will find them quoted at full length in Carrick's Life of Wallace, vol. i. Appendix E.

they would use their influence to recall their vassals to their allegiance. In the midst of this show of trust, however, the king detained their eldest sons as hostages for their fidelity. Others he took with him to Flanders, where his own presence was at this moment imperiously required; and, having ordered as many of his barons as he could spare from his war on the continent, to proceed, with their feudal services, into Scotland, he passed over the Channel, and awaited the result of the struggle with feelings of considerable anxiety. Nor were these causeless alarms.

In every direction fortune seemed to wait upon the arms of Wallace. The English garrisons of Forfar, Brechin, Montrose, and many other important stations on the north of the Forth, were successively reduced; and the Scottish army had commenced the siege of Dundee, when intelligence arrived that the Earl of Surrey, and Hugh Cressingham, the treasurer, at the head of an army of fifty thousand foot, and a thousand heavy-armed horse, were on their march to Stirling. It appears from this, that although Surrey was superseded by Fitzalan in his situation as governor, he still retained the command of the army; but he was now extremely indolent and infirm from the united effects of age and disease, and Cressingham, the treasurer, whose extortions had rendered him peculiarly obnoxious to the Scots, although a churchman, imitated the example of the warlike Bishop of Durham, and not only accompanied the army, but insisted on directing the operations and over-ruling the opinion of its officers. Of all these matters Wallace appears to have received

accurate information; and on ascertaining the advance of the English army to Stirling, his knowledge of the country immediately suggested the advantage of gaining the high ground upon the banks of the Forth near Cambuskenneth, before the enemy had passed the narrow wooden bridge, which at that place was thrown over the river. If he could, by a rapid march, pre-occupy this ground, he knew that he should either compel them to retreat, or give them battle under circumstances which rendered a victory almost certain. He therefore immediately drew off his army from the siege of the castle of Dundee, having first commanded the townsmen and magistrates to prosecute it during his absence, and threatened them with the extremities of military execution, if, upon his return, he found they had neglected his injunctions. He then proceeded towards Stirling with the utmost celerity, and had the satisfaction to occupy the hill above Cambuskenneth previous to the English army coming in sight. It was not long, however, before their columns appeared; and, on taking up their position on the banks of the river, with the bridge in their front, they found themselves directly opposed to the army of Wallace, which was ready to dispute the passage. The Scottish chief, however, had availed himself of the nature of the ground, to conceal the greater proportion of his troops, with the evident intention of inducing the English to pass the river. His army, owing to the desertion of the nobles, was exceedingly inferior in horse, of which he had only been able to muster one hundred and eighty; but it was strong,

not only in the numerical force of his infantry, which amounted to forty thousand, but in the skill and courage of the men, who had been bred up to war under his own eye, confident in their captain, and inured almost to daily battle. At this moment two of the principal Scottish nobles, the High Steward and the Earl of Lennox, sought the English quarters, and requested Lord Surrey to delay hostilities for a short time, until they had made an attempt to negotiate with Wallace. If they did not succeed in this, they promised to return with a body of forty horse, and to endeavour to prevail upon their armed vassals, who had joined the Scottish leader, to desert his banner. The probability seems to be, that the barons were not sincere in either of these proposals; and that Surrey, awake to some of the difficulties of his situation, and desirous of avoiding a battle, in permitting them to engage in the negotiation foolishly afforded them not only an opportunity of carrying information to Wallace regarding the strength and disposition of the English, but of entering into an agreement with him as to their own future conduct. All this concluded exactly as might have been anticipated. After a decent interval, the Earl of Lennox and the Steward returned, with the intelligence that Wallace would not listen to any proposal for a negotiation, and that such was the enthusiasm and attachment of those around him, that not a single man would leave his service.

Early next morning, a large body of the Welsh levies, along with a division of five thousand English foot, defiled over the bridge; and were pro-

ceeding to take up their ground on the opposite side, when they were suddenly recalled, and obliged to rejoin the main army, under the frivolous pretext that the Earl of Surrey was still asleep in the camp, and would not be ready to take the command for an hour. When this had elapsed, and the aged chief made his appearance, the whole army was drawn up, and the common feudal usage of creating knights before a battle took place, with its usual pomp and solemnity. During this interval, Surrey had carefully inspected the ground, and becoming convinced of the dangers of his own situation, if he attempted to pass the bridge, and the advantage enjoyed by the enemy, he determined to make a last attempt at negotiation. Two friars, accordingly, were dispatched to propose terms to Wallace, who dismissed them with this memorable reply,—"Go back, and tell your leaders, that we came here with no pacific intent, but prepared for battle, determined to give freedom to our country, and inflict vengeance upon her oppressors. Let them advance therefore. We are ready to meet them beard to beard."* The rash and presumptuous temper of Cressingham, the treasurer, had been already irritated by the delay of Surrey; and incensed at this cool defiance, he now insisted, along with the division which he commanded, to be permitted instantly to attack the enemy. But the elder and better officers still hesitated; and, at this moment, Sir Richard Lundin, one of the Scottish barons who had joined the English at

* Hemingford, vol. i. p. 126, "*In barbas eorum.*"

Irvine, implored them to delay: "If you attempt the passage of the bridge," said he, "which will hold only two abreast, defeat is inevitable, for the enemy will attack us on both flanks before we form. Give me but five hundred horse—I know, and will conduct you to, a ford, not far off, where forty men have room to cross at once; and with these we can turn the Scottish force, and attack it in the rear, whilst you, lord earl, and the main body of the army, may pass the bridge in perfect safety." It was fortunate for the Scots that the advice of this veteran soldier was not followed, and that the insolence of the treasurer, whom an ancient English historian stigmatizes as "a vainglorious fool, devoted to destruction," compelled Surrey to renounce his better judgment. "Wherefore," exclaimed Cressingham, "do we protract the war, and expend the treasure of the king? Let us attack the enemy, and fulfil our knightly duty!" These taunts at last prevailed, and Surrey gave orders for the army to move. "It was indeed," says Hemingford, whose information was derived from those who were present, "a circumstance at which we can never sufficiently wonder, and which produced the most calamitous effects, that so many experienced soldiers should attempt the passage of a narrow bridge, where there was scarce room for two horsemen to ride abreast, in the presence of an enemy ready to attack them. I have heard it stated by those who were in the battle, that, if they had defiled across it without the slightest check, from the rising of the sun till eleven o'clock, the rear division would still have remained on the other side, and that, were you to search the whole

kingdom, you could not have selected a spot more favourable for placing the English army within the power of their enemies, or for delivering a large force into the hands of a few."* Meanwhile, the bannerets of the king and of Lord Surrey, leading on the advance of the army, began to gallop across the bridge, amongst whom the most conspicuous was Sir Marmaduke de Twenge—a brave and experienced leader, mounted on a horse which was barbed, or armed, in complete steel, as were, indeed, the greater portion of this leading division, forming a very noble body of cavalry, but, from the enormous weight of their armour, peculiarly unfitted for the service in which they were now engaged.

During the whole of this time, the Scots kept their ranks on the high ground; and whilst the rest of the English army, led by Cressingham, were eagerly crowding across the bridge, and those who had already passed were attempting to regain their order on the opposite shore, Twenge formed his division of heavy-armed horse, and impetuously led them up the hill against the main army of the Scots. This manœuvre was the worst which could have been adopted. It gave time to a body of Scottish spearmen, who had been sent with this design, to make a short detour, and occupy the foot of the bridge, thus cutting off the retreat of nearly one half of the army which had already passed, whilst the heavy-armed cavalry were exhausted by the attempt to spur their horses up the hill. All this had been an-

* Hemingford, vol. i. p. 128.

ticipated by Wallace, and the moment that he saw the success of his division, which had occupied the bridge, and cut off the communication between the rear and the van of the English, he left his position on the heights, and, at the head of his whole army, charged down the hill with the utmost fury, attacking the division of Twenge, when it was disordered and disjointed by the rugged ground through which they had attempted to make their way, and throwing both it, and the squadrons led by Cressingham, into inextricable confusion. Sir Marmaduke, in the meantime, extricated some part of his division, and, charging the body of Scottish horse, whose numbers were far inferior to the English, compelled them to give way, and rashly pursued them off the field to a considerable distance. On returning, he found that Wallace had totally defeated the main body of the English, and that to rejoin the remainder of his own force, through the dreadful scene which presented itself, would be almost impossible. Cressingham, to whose rashness the defeat was mainly to be attributed, had fallen early in the battle; and whole squadrons of the infantry and the light troops, who had never got time to form, were put to the sword; whilst the heavy-armed horse, encumbered by the weight of their harness and accoutrements, were driven into the river and drowned, or cut to pieces in detail upon its banks. In the midst of this carnage and confusion, the rest of the troops, who had remained with Surrey on the opposite side, enraged at the fate of their companions, and anxious to avenge their death, crowded over the bridge, but it was

only to experience the same fate; for no human skill could retrieve the day, and each division, if it succeeded in extricating itself from the narrow passage, was attacked and broken by the Scots, before it was possible for them to form a line.

In the midst of this dreadful slaughter and tumult, a scene occurred which is strikingly characteristic of the chivalrous spirit of the times. On his return from pursuing the Scottish horse, Sir Marmaduke de Twenge found the whole body, or, as they are denominated by Hemingford, the impenetrable wedges of the hostile army, between him and the bridge; upon which one of his followers, riding up to him, advised, as a last resource, that they should attempt to save themselves by swimming their horses across the river. "God forbid!" cried Twenge, "that it should ever be said of me that I volunteered to drown myself, when there was enough of dry ground to fight on, or that so foul a stain should fix itself on the fair fame of English knights; but be of good courage, follow me, and I promise you we shall erelong regain the bridge." On saying this he struck his spurs into the flanks of his horse, and being carried with the utmost fury into the midst of the enemy, unhorsed, slew, or wounded all who opposed him, actually clearing by his sword a road or lane to his followers, and rejoined Surrey, along with his nephew, and a few of his own knights who had survived the battle.*

This earl, who, during the whole attack, had

* Knighton, p. 2518.

remained on the further side of the river, a spectator of the total discomfiture of his army, now began to be anxious for his own safety; and committing the charge of the broken relics of his force, and of the castle of Stirling, to Sir Marmaduke de Twenge, galloped off at full speed to Berwick, which he reached without drawing bridle; "a wonderful ride," says a contemporary English historian, "for our old earl, and performed with such rapidity and good will, that the horse which he used, when stabled in the convent of the Friars Minors, would not taste his corn."* In the meantime, nothing could exceed the spirit of cruel and unmitigated hatred with which the Scottish soldiers pursued the flying relics of the army which they had routed; and at this moment, the High Steward and Lennox, who had cautiously concealed themselves in the woods, watching the side for which fortune declared itself, broke from their ambush, at the head of their vassals, and joining in the pursuit, put to the sword great numbers of the enemy. Plunder, however, was the great object of these wary barons, who, having left the brunt and danger of the battle to Wallace and his soldiers, now, when all was gained, came in to appropriate the spoils, and were seen busily engaged in driving the baggage waggons and camp equipage, which had been abandoned by the English, into the heart of the woods and fastnesses, where they might divide the booty at their leisure.† It is difficult, in the conflicting accounts of contemporary historians, to discover

* Hemingford, vol. i. p. 131. † Ibid. p. 130.

the numbers that fell in this memorable battle. That Surrey's army was entirely dispersed, being either drowned, or slain, or disabled by wounds, is certain from the solitary flight of the general, and the fact, that not even the remains of a single squadron or division could be brought together to cover the retreat of the English, or check the pursuit of the enemy. Every thing was lost; and Wallace could proudly say, that Scotland was, by his exertions, once more a free country.

He had to lament, however, the death of the brave Sir Andrew Moray, his friend and companion, and the only leader of note who was lost by the Scots.* The fate of Hugh Cressingham, the treasurer, seems to have excited little sympathy amongst his countrymen; and as he had rendered himself especially odious to the Scots by his pecuniary exactions, they not only exulted over his death, but, with an unjustifiable ferocity, insulted and mangled his remains. "He," says Hemingford, "who in the days of his pride had oppressed and wounded many with the sword of his tongue, now fell a victim to the sword of the wicked. For the Scots not only slew him, but flayed his dead body, and cut his skin into small fragments, not to be preserved as relics, but employed in the basest uses."† Another chronicle accuses Wallace himself of having made a sword-belt out of the cuticle of the treasurer—which is best proved to be untrue, by its being impossible.

Edward, after the termination of his campaign in 1296, had given orders for a strong wall to

* Fordun, vol. i. p. 171. † Hemingford, p. 130.

be built round Berwick, and had intrusted the completion of the fortifications of this important frontier town to Cressingham; but his commands had been neglected; and Surrey, receiving information of the advance of the enemy, abandoned the town, which he deemed incapable of defence, and set out to join the Prince of Wales, who, during the absence of his father, held his court in the north.

SECTION II.

Consequences of the Victory at Stirling—Wallace's strict discipline and rigour in recruiting his Army—His Invasion of England—Dreadful Devastation committed by the Scots—His Protection to the Abbey of Hexham—On his Return into Scotland, Wallace is chosen Governor of the Kingdom—Discontent of the Scottish Nobles—Patrick, Earl of Dunbar, refuses to obey Wallace's Summons—Signal Vengeance inflicted on this Baron—Edward I. makes great Preparations for the Invasion of Scotland—Description of the English Army—Wallace's Plan for the Campaign—Similar to that afterwards adopted by Bruce——Edward invades the Country—Extraordinary State in which he finds Scotland—Advances into Lothian—as far as Kirkliston—Famine in the English Army—He is compelled to issue orders for a Retreat—He is informed by the Earls of Dunbar and Angus of the Position of the Scots, and instantly advances—Battle of Falkirk—Treachery of Comyn—Complete Defeat of the Scots—Wallace retreats with the Relics of his Army—The Scots burn Stirling and Perth to prevent them affording Shelter or Supplies to the English—They afterwards waste the whole Country—Edward is compelled to retreat for want of Supplies—Pursues his March to Durham—Reflections upon the Conduct of Wallace, and the Campaign of 1298—Jealousies of Wallace amongst the Scottish Nobles—He resigns the Office of Governor—Obscurity which involves his History after this period—Traditions of his having visited France—Purity of his Public Character—Election of Comyn, Lamberton, and Bruce to the Regency of Scotland—The King of England subdues Scotland—Submission of the Regents—They are pardoned, and fined—Edward refuses all Terms to Wallace—Betrayed by Sir John Menteith—His Trial—Execution—Character.

After the battle of Stirling, Wallace proceeded to avail himself to the utmost, and without a moment's delay, of the advantages which such brilliant success placed within his reach. He first led back his army to the siege of Dundee; and such was the terror occasioned by his victory, that the English governor and his garrison surrendered at discretion, giving up the castle, with a large store of arms and of money, into the hands of the conqueror. The rest of the fortresses in Scotland still occupied by the English, speedily followed this example; and of these some, by the orders of Wallace, were razed to the ground; others dismantled and rendered untenable; a few garrisoned, and committed to soldiers of tried fidelity. It was now pretty far advanced in the autumn; and, owing to the ravages of war, the interruption of the labours of agriculture, and the severity of the season, a great dearth of all the necessaries of life began to be felt throughout the land. To relieve the country, therefore, of the presence and support of his army, the Scottish chief, whose popularity with the body of the nation was now deservedly high, and whose power none dared to resist, summoned an array of all the fighting men in Scotland, and declared his determination of invading England, and supporting his troops within the territory of his enemies. He assumed, at the same time, as his partner in command, the young Sir Andrew Moray of Bothwell, the son of that brave baron who had fallen in the battle of Stirling. But, whilst engaged in preparations for his expedition into England, the state of the commerce of the kingdom attracted

his attention; and it appears, from a very interesting document recently discovered, that, in his own name, and that of Andrew Moray, appointed by the community of Scotland leaders of their army, he addressed a letter to the municipal authorities of Lubeck and Hamburg, returning them his warm acknowledgments for their attention to the interests of Scottish commerce, as well as for their prompt assistance and advice to his countrymen, who traded to their cities, in all their bargains and transactions. "Thanks be to God," says he, "the kingdom of Scotland has been recovered during the war from the power of the English; and we request you, therefore, to inform your merchants, that they shall now have free and safe access to every port within the realm, for themselves and their commodities."* He then reverted to his military preparations; and, in the organization of the army for the invasion of England, enforced a strict system of discipline, and anxiously superintended the arrival of the levies. The details

* As far as I have had an opportunity of examining it, there seems every reason to believe in the authenticity of this interesting letter, although, without an inspection of the original, and the seal appended to it, it would be improper definitively to pronounce it genuine. The mission of Wallace to Flanders, after the battle of Stirling, is mentioned by Langtoft, vol. ii. p. 298,—a circumstance strongly corroborating the letter: the document itself was first published by the late Sartorius, in a work on the Origin of the Teutonic Hanse Towns, continued and published by the learned Dr Lappenberg, archivist of Hamburg; but it had escaped the notice of all the English and Scottish historians, till brought to light by the laudable research of a late biographer of Wallace,—Mr D. Carrick.

of this muster, and of the method which he adopted to enforce the levies, are given by an ancient and authentic historian. "He caused," says he, "returns of the exact number of fighting men between the ages of sixteen and sixty, to be given by every county or shire, by every barony and lordship, by every city, royal burgh, village, and even hamlet, so that, without his knowledge, no single person could be absent on any pretence whatever from the array; and, to enforce obedience, he ordered a strong gallows to be erected in every barony and market town, upon which all who fled from the summons, and could allege no good excuse for absence, were ordered to be hanged." Nor was this a mere nominal order. It was most rigorously enforced, as the burgesses of Aberdeen experienced when they least expected it; for Wallace, when the army was on its march towards England, having discovered that some of the citizens of that town had treated his summons with contempt, and absented themselves from the levy, rode back at the head of a small body of his cavalry, and having seized the unhappy offenders, had them instantly executed, after which he rejoined his troops with such speed, that it was scarcely known he had been absent.

The army now advanced into England, and so great was the terror inspired by its merciless and indiscriminate ravages, that the inhabitants deserted the country, and fled in great multitudes into the interior. The English inhabitants of Berwick abandoned the city, which was immediately occupied by the Scots, although the castle re-

mained in the hands of the enemy. Nearly the whole population of Northumberland flocked into Newcastle, or took refuge in the more distant provinces and castles, accompanied by their wives and children, and covering the highways with flocks and herds, and waggons laden with household furniture.* Aware of this total desertion of the country, and anxious to deceive the inhabitants into a speedy return to their homes, Wallace halted for a considerable time, as if he had changed his original intention, and threw out indications of a retrograde movement into Scotland. This had the desired effect; the poor Northumbrians, weary of their banishment, returned to their farms and hamlets—the herds and flocks again fed on their accustomed hills—the children re-occupied their early haunts, and the labours of the country were again resumed in apparent peace and security, when the Scottish chief, who only waited the information of his scouts, rushed like a minister of supreme vengeance into the heart of the happy district, and reduced it, within the space of a few days, into the condition of a wide and blackened desert. In this indiscriminate ravage, cottage, tower, and temple, went to the ground; neither sex, nor age, nor infancy, were spared; and the memory of the recent and indiscriminate massacre, perpetrated by Edward at Berwick, in which seventeen thousand of their countrymen had been put to the sword, appears to have wrought up the Scottish army to a pitch of fury and revenge, which it was difficult fully to gratify, and impossible in

* Hemingford, vol. i. p. 131.

any way to control.* It is not easy to give a more striking picture of this dreadful visitation than that which is conveyed in the words of Hemingford, who was an eye-witness. "At this time," says he, "the Scots took up their quarters in the forest of Rothebery; nor was there any one to make them afraid, whilst the praise of God, and the services of religion, were not heard in any church or monastery throughout the country, from Newcastle-upon-Tyne to the gates of Carlisle. All the monks, canons regular, and ministers of religion, along with the whole body of the people, had fled from the face of the Scots, who were permitted to pass their whole time in one continued scene of slaughter, burning, and rapine, from the Feast of St Luke to St Martin's Day; nor was any one found to oppose them, except the soldiers of the garrison of Berwick, and of other castles hard by, who ventured from their walls, and cut off a few stragglers in the rear."† On approaching Carlisle, which was at this time strongly fortified, and well provided for a siege, both from the state of its garrison and the number and magnitude of its warlike engines, the Scots summoned it to surrender in very haughty terms, dispatching a priest as their envoy, who thus addressed the citizens: "My master, William the Conqueror, bids you to wit, that if you regard your own lives, and are an-

* Langtoft's Chronicles, vol. ii. p. 298—

"The North is nere all brent,
Nocht stands them before, toun, castelle, nor toure."

† Hemingford, vol. i. pp. 131, 132.

xious to spare the effusion of blood, you will give up your city and castle, which, if you do, your lives and members, and worldly goods, shall be safe from harm; but if not, he will take your city by storm, and utterly exterminate both you and it."—"And who is this Conqueror?" said the hardy burghers of Carlisle. "It is he," replied the envoy, "whom you call William Walays."—"Go back, then," they retorted, "and inform him, that our sovereign hath delivered to us, for his own royal behoof, and that of his heirs, the custody and defence of this city and castle; nor do we imagine that it would be at all agreeable to him, or that he would ratify the transaction, were we to surrender it to your Lord William; but return whence you came, and tell him, that if he is so eager to possess it, he may come like a courageous conqueror, and storm the walls, and make himself master, if he can, of the city and the castle, with all their contents." This brave defiance, which was accompanied by a muster of the soldiers upon the walls, and a formidable array of springalds and trebuchets, ready to discharge their weapons on any who approached, Wallace did not think it proper to accept; for the symptoms of a severe winter began to appear, and from the want of battering engines, with which he appears to have been totally unprovided, it was probable, that, even if successful, the siege would have detained his army far beyond the time it was prudent to remain in England. He declined, therefore, from Carlisle, and marching through the middle of the forest of Inglewood, carried his ravages through

Cumberland and Allendale, as far as Derwent and Cockermouth.* They were now about to enter the county of Durham, and to carry fire and sword into the district which was regarded, with peculiar veneration, as the sacred territory of St Cuthbert, when the sky suddenly became lurid and angry; the wind howled frightfully through the woods, and a tremendous storm of hail, accompanied by an intense frost, broke upon the heads of the soldiers with a violence which precluded all advance. The saint, it was said, had manifested his wrath against the intended sacrilege, and had armed the storm and the elements in his defence. It is probable that, in this dark age, the mind of the Scottish leader was impressed with a serious belief in such supernatural agencies. It is certain, at least, that he abstained from entering the sacred territory, and, directing his averted wrath against the counties to the south of the Tyne, began to think of retreating into his own country.

In the Scottish army which invaded England at this time, there was a large body of Galwegians,—a set of men of peculiarly fierce, cruel, and intractable habits, whom, since the days of David I., no discipline had been able to control, whose ferocity no advancement in the arts of civilized life had been sufficient to subdue, and whose numbers and bravery rendered their desertion from the army, or their remaining in Scotland in a state of discontent or insurrection, a matter of equal danger to the state. In the great

* Hemingford, vol. i. p. 133.

invasion of England which was conducted by David I., a century and a half previous to this, the insubordination and inhumanity of these troops had disgraced the character of the army, and nearly cost the king his life; and now, after the lapse of so long a period, little change had taken place in their national habits. They plundered the churches and monasteries with the same indifference as any ordinary dwelling; they hesitated not to slay the priests on the steps of the altar, and to drag the forms of suppliant age or shrieking beauty from the holiest asylum, to which they had fled for refuge. Indeed, the splendour of the Catholic churches at this period —the rich chalices—the golden cups and patens —the embroidered robes, and jewelled altar-cloths—the velvet palls, and massy censers, crosiers, and mitres, which were to be found in the treasury or wardrobe-rooms of the various religious houses, offered a prize to an invading army, which few even of the best disciplined of the Scottish soldiers were able to resist, and which Wallace, who had so lately witnessed the intrusion of a large body of English ecclesiastics upon the Scottish livings, might not, according to his rude notions of retaliatory justice, think it either advisable or necessary to discountenance.

On at least one occasion, however, the Scottish leader interposed his authority to check these lamentable excesses; and the circumstances in which his interference took place, illustrate in a striking manner the habits of the soldiery, and the character of their chief. In their advance, the army had plundered the monastery and chapel of

Hexham, or Hexildesham, as it was then called, which was dedicated to St Andrew, the patron saint of Scotland, and, from its spiritual affinity to the Scottish church, had been spared by David I. when he invaded Northumberland in 1138.* It had not, however, been so unpitiably sacked and destroyed by Wallace as many other places; and when the Scottish army passed onward in its destructive progress, two monks, who had fled from the convent with the rest of their brethren, crept fearfully from their places of concealment, and returning to their former residence, began to repair the ravages, and to cleanse the holy places from the blood by which they had been desecrated and polluted. It happened, however, that Wallace retreated far sooner than had been expected; when engaged in these pious duties, the alarm and tumult of the returning army struck upon the ear of the unhappy brethren, and ere they had time to fly, the long spears of the Scottish soldiers were at their breasts. "Show us where you have concealed your treasures," cried they; "lead us to your secret hoards."—"Alas! you know best where these are," answered the trembling monks; "for you have already robbed us of all in your first visit."—"It is false," was the reply to this timid remonstrance; "and you shall be murdered if you do not obey us,"—a threat which would undoubtedly have been fulfilled, had not Wallace himself, at this moment, entered the oratory in full armour, and rescuing the priests from the brutal hands which were laid upon them, com-

* J. Hagustald, p. 260.

manded them to perform mass, marshalling his soldiers in a circle round the altar, and compelling them, by his looks and gesture, into silence and attention. When it came to the moment of the elevation of the host, the Scottish chief reverently stept aside for a short interval to disarm himself; but his absence, even for an instant, loosened at once the ties of discipline, and he returned to witness a dreadful scene. The soldiers broke in upon the holy ceremony, snatched the cup from the hands of the priest, tore off the velvet coverlet, seized the golden paten on which the sacred wafer was deposited, and stript the place of its holiest ornaments, whilst the priest, in horror at the sacrilege, and trembling for his life, clung to the rails of the altar. The return of Wallace could not prevent this shocking scene, but he instantly commanded the most violent amongst the plunderers to be seized and put to death. "Remain beside me," said he to the wretched monks; "it is here only you will be safe, for my soldiers are an evil race, and I dare not restrain them."* To prevent also, as much as lay in his power, the recurrence of such disorders, he granted to the monks and their convent his letters of protection, in which he associates with his own, the name of Andrew Moray, or de Moravia; and whilst he gives the precedence to this youthful baron, it may be remarked, that the style which he assumes is simply, "Leader of the Scottish army, in the name of an illustrious prince, John, King of Scotland,"—a decisive proof, that at this

* Hemingford, vol. i. p. 135.

period, which was the 7th of November, 1297, Wallace had not been chosen governor of Scotland by any party in the state. The letter of protection itself is curious, as one of the few authentic memorials which remain of this extraordinary man. It runs in the following terms:—"Andrew Moray and William Walays, leaders of the Scottish army, in the name of an illustrious prince, John, by the grace of God, and the consent of the people, King of Scots, to all the subjects of the said kingdom to whom these letters may come, greeting: Know ye, that in the name of the said king, we have taken under his peace and protection, and under ours also, the prior and convent of Hexildesham, in Northumberland, his lands, his men, his whole possessions of movable and immovable property. Wherefore, we strictly prohibit any one from inflicting, either upon their persons, lands, or goods, any grievance, or attack, or injury, under the penalty of forfeiting his estate to our lord the king; and we declare, that whoever shall slay any member or members of the same religious house, shall do so under the pain of death and demembration." Along with this general protection, which was to last only for a year, a letter was given by Wallace, which granted to any monk of Hexham the privilege of immediate access to himself, or to Moray. After this, as the winter began to set in with uncommon severity, he collected the various divisions of his army which were scattered about for plunder in distant directions, and after a desolating visit of three weeks, in which the three border counties of England had been reduced to

grievous distress, he distributed the share of the plunder to the Galwegians, and returned to Scotland.*

When the intelligence of the extent of the Scottish revolt, and the great successes of Wallace, first reached Edward, who was then in Flanders, it appears that he had written in considerable alarm to the Scottish nobles, returning them his thanks for their loyal assistance against his rebels, exhorting them to lend every further aid to Brian Fitz-Alan, his new guardian, in fortifying the castles of Berwick and Roxburgh, and informing them, that his late governor of Scotland, the Earl of Surrey, was then, as they perhaps knew, upon his journey to Prince Edward, his lieutenant, in England,—a quaint and delicate allusion to the flight of that nobleman from Stirling.† It is important to observe the names to whom these letters were directed, as they contain unexceptionable evidence of the spirit of determined opposition with which, at this period, the greater part of the Scottish nobles were animated against Wallace. They were John Comyn of Badenoch; Patrick Dunbar, Earl of March; Gilbert de Umfraville, Earl of Angus; Alexander, Earl of Menteith; Malise, Earl of Strathern; James, the Steward of Scotland; John Comyn, Earl of Buchan; Malcolm, Earl of Lennox; and William, Earl of Sutherland; besides four other potent barons, Nicholas de la Haye, Ingelram de Umfraville, Richard Fraser, or Fresel, and Alexander de Lindesay. Six other Scottish

* Hemingford, p. 136. † Rotuli Scotiæ, vol. i. p. 50.

nobles, the Earls of Caithness, Ross, Mar, Athole, Fife, and Carrick, were overlooked, or purposely omitted, by Edward; but Mar was a minor, and Carrick, who had joined the insurgents for a short time, soon after renewed his allegiance to Edward. The rest may be presumed to have supported, or at least, to have favoured, the cause of Wallace; and upon the return of this victorious leader, at the head of a powerful army, into Scotland, the whole body of the Scottish aristocracy found themselves in an awkward and perilous dilemma. He whom they had hated and deserted, was now the most popular man in Scotland; he had succeeded, not only without their assistance, but in direct opposition to their united efforts, in restoring freedom to his country; he had recovered its castles out of the hands of the enemy, he had triumphed over the army of England in a great battle, had slain or expelled the governors of Edward from the land which they had oppressed, and had invaded England, and supported his army in the heart of the enemy's own territory.

The next proceeding of Wallace was of a decided and important nature. Conscious of the strength he now possessed, having evinced to the nation that he was able and worthy to be their governor, and aware, that to defeat the opposition of the nobles, and to defy the vengeance of Edward, he required a strength and authority which he had not yet possessed, he, on his return to Scotland, assembled a meeting of his followers, and by their voice, was solemnly elected Governor of Scotland, "in the name of an illustrious prince, John, King of Scotland, and by consent of the

Community of the same." The particulars of this transaction are unfortunately involved in much obscurity, and no authentic record of the nomination of this great man to the supreme authority in the state, has reached our times. That, with the exception of the proud barons, who had systematically opposed him, the elevation was joyfully confirmed by a nation of whom he had ever been the idol and the hero, is beyond all doubt; and it is not improbable, that a few of the nobles and lesser barons who had already joined his party, along with some who began to dread his increasing power, may have assembled to give their sanction to a choice which they could not resist; yet the total omission of the usual mention of the clergy and nobility of Scotland, in the style which he assumed soon after his election, renders this problematical. His own army, and the people of Scotland, were undoubtedly the main instruments in raising Wallace to this high distinction.*

But, in whatever way the election took place, the event itself was productive of very important effects. The elevation of a simple knight, whom they regarded as of mean extraction in comparison with themselves, to the supreme power in the state, was an insult to their feudal pride, and to every feeling and association in which they

* Fordun, vol. ii. pp. 170, 174. His style in the famous charter published in Anderson's Diplomata, Plate XLIII. is "Willelmus Walays, Miles, Custos Regni Scocie et Ductor Exercituum ejusdem, Nomine Præclari Principis Domini Johannis Dei Gratia Regis Scocie, de Consensu Communitatis ejusdem Regni."

had been educated, which the Scottish nobles could not easily forgive; and the secret conviction that Wallace despised them for the pusillanimous part which they had acted, and that he now possessed the power to enforce their obedience to his authority, created in their bosoms a conflict of fear and hatred, which had the most fatal influence on the national cause. An anecdote of the Earl of Dunbar, perhaps one of the most authentic of those which rest upon the authority of the Minstrel, illustrates the feelings with which the aristocracy received the orders of the new governor in a very striking manner. To this powerful lord, Wallace addressed his summons, requiring him, by his authority as governor of Scotland, to attend a convention of the nobility, which was to be held at St Johnston. When the envoy presented the writ, the earl made a profound reverence, and receiving it with a well-affected humility, observed, that he had seldom been honoured by so singular a message. "It seems to me a strange thing," he continued, "that Wallace should reign as governor, and truly I esteem it a proof of the great scarcity of good kings in this poor land; yet, till better acquainted with his title, I must take the liberty of declining any allegiance to your King of Kyle, of whom I have yet to discover that I ever held a foot of land. What will you more? I am lord of mine own; as free to reign in this land of mine, as ever was prince or king. I am a freeman, and I despise your summons." In this arrogant and ironical reply, the earl scarcely exaggerated his own power. He held one of the largest, and, from its

situation, one of the most important, districts in Scotland. Besides his almost impregnable fortress of Dunbar, his dominions on the borders between the two kingdoms were protected by a chain of seven fortalices, which, from the warlike vigilance with which they were garrisoned and kept in repair, went by the familiar name of his Seven War-steeds; and the passes communicating between his territory and the two countries on either side, were of such a nature, as to be easily held by inferior numbers against a far superior force. But Wallace, insulted by his reply, and aware of the necessity of supporting his new authority by an immediate vengeance, attacked the proud baron, with a combination of force and skill which nothing could resist. Defeating him, in the first instance, at Innerwick, he next drove him, with great loss, from Cockburn's-path, (originally Colbrand's-path,) a strong pass, eight miles from Dunbar, and thence expelled him, although reinforced by a strong body of the English, from strength to strength, and valley to valley, till he left him, without lands, or houses, or vassals, a pensioned fugitive upon the bounty of England. He then garrisoned his castle of Dunbar, which he intrusted to Cristal de Seton, and levelled to the ground his seven border fortalices, called methamys,* or, in the warlike pleasantry of the times, houghed, that is, cut the hamstrings of Corspatrick's war-steeds.

* Méthamys, or metehamys, border mansions; from mete, or meith, a boundary, and haym, or hame, a home. —Jamieson's "*Wallace*," b. viii. p. 183.

Having completed his expedition, and established, in the punishment of Dunbar, an example of rapid vengeance, which was not lost upon the rest of the nobility, Wallace proceeded, in the exercise of his authority as governor, to reward those amongst his faithful followers to whose bravery and perseverance he owed so much of his success. Of the various grants which were then conferred upon his partisans, one remarkable document alone remains, which has been already alluded to,* by which the office of Constable of the castle of Dundee, with its rights, liberties, and privileges, was bestowed upon a brave baron, Alexander de Skirmishur,† in consequence of his faithful service and support to the kingdom in bearing the royal banner in the army of Scotland at the time when the charter was granted, which is dated at Torphichen, on the 28th of March, 1298. Subsequently to this period, his power and popularity were rapidly on the increase. "Within a short time after he was appointed guardian," says Fordun, "he compelled, by the vigour of his character, and the integrity of his government, the whole of the nobility of Scotland to submit to his authority, whether with or without their inclination. And if any one amongst them was so hardy as to refuse obedience, he knew well how to restrain and overawe him, committing his person to ward until he showed himself entirely subservient to his commands. By these means, all were reduced to a state of tranquillity amongst themselves; and having effected this, he addressed himself to

* Supra, p. 234. † *i. e.* Scrymgeour.

the expulsion of the enemy from the castles and fortresses which they still held."* Of these, the most important was the strong border fortress of Roxburgh; and to the siege of this place, to which Wishart, the able and intriguing Bishop of Glasgow, had retreated, after the capitulation at Irvine, Wallace now led his army.†

In the meantime, full intelligence of these transactions reached the English monarch, who was still detained in Flanders. He had been already aware of the victory at Stirling, but he appears to have at first undervalued the danger. He now learnt its consequences: the total expulsion of the English—the subsequent invasion of the border counties, and the dreadful ravages committed by the Scots—the elevation of Wallace—the desertion of the nobility—and the resumption of the war, by the siege of Roxburgh. For all this he was little prepared, amid the embarrassments of his continental politics, and the secret but ill-concealed disgusts of his own nobility; yet, opposing to the difficulties with which he was surrounded, that calm and intrepid resolution which was so striking a feature in the character of this great king, he proceeded, with as much rapidity as possible, to conclude a truce with France. Previous to this, however, he directed the prince, his son, to summon a council of the nobility to meet at York, on the 14th of January; and once again addressed his writs to the great men of Scotland, requiring them to attend upon

* Fordun, vol. ii. p. 170. Wynton, vol. ii. p. 98.
† Triveti Annales, p. 311.

that occasion, under the penalty of being considered and dealt with as traitors. He took care also, by a timely ratification of the great charter, and the charter of the forests, with some additional clauses, which were highly favourable to the liberty of the subject, to secure the support and affections of his own barons at the moment when he most required their assistance; and, in consequence of this wise sacrifice of his pride and prerogative to the exigencies of the time, there assembled, at Newcastle-upon-Tyne, an army, which, both for numbers and equipment, was of the most formidable description. It included two thousand choice cavalry, armed, both man and horse, in complete steel; two thousand light horse; and not less than a hundred thousand foot, comprehending a large body of Welsh levies. The English nobles also, who on some former occasions, when disgusted with the conduct of the king, had sent their feudal services, but remained themselves in their castles, now attended in great force. The marshal and the constable of England, the Earls of Surrey, Gloucester, and Arundel, Lord Henry Percy, John de Wake, John de Segrave, Guido, son of the Earl of Warwick, with many others of the most powerful barons and gentry, obeyed the summons in person; and placing themselves at the head of this overwhelming force, advanced to the relief of Roxburgh, from which the Scots immediately retired, prudently declining all contest in a pitched field, with an army by which they were so greatly outnumbered.

Having thus succeeded in raising the siege of

Roxburgh, the army pursued its march as far as Kelso, and afterwards fell back upon Berwick, which they found deserted by the enemy. They were here met by a message from Edward, which informed them, that having finally concluded his truce with France, he meant instantly to sail for England, and to join his army in person, which he would straightway lead against his rebels in Scotland; and he therefore required them to suspend all farther operations, till his arrival at head-quarters. On receiving these commands, the Earl of Surrey immediately dismissed the greater part of that immense force which it would have been ruinous to have supported at the expense of the country, for any length of time; and, having retained with him a select body of twenty thousand spearmen and archers, with fifteen hundred horse, he awaited the farther commands of his sovereign.

That indefatigable and enterprising prince had now sailed from Flanders, and arriving at Sandwich, with a speed which seemed far too slow to his impetuous temper, he scarcely planted his foot in his own dominions when the whole disposable force of England was summoned to meet him at Roxburgh on the 24th of June. He at the same time reiterated his commands to the barons of Scotland, under pain of immediate forfeiture, to attend his parliament at York, and to join the muster of his army with their vassals; but these peremptory commands the Scottish nobles found it either inconvenient or impossible to obey, and those amongst them who had attended upon him in his wars in Flanders, upon his em-

barkation for England, forsook his service and resorted to the French king. In the interval between the meeting of his parliament at York, and the muster of his army at Roxburgh, Edward, with that mistaken devotion which could implore the blessing of Heaven upon his most ambitious aggressions, took a pilgrimage to the shrine of St John of Beverley,* from whence it is probable that he carried away the sacred standard belonging to this religious house, which was held in much veneration, and had accompanied the army in its expedition into Scotland in 1296. On his return to Roxburgh, he had the satisfaction to find his whole forces collected; and the army, in point of numbers, splendour, and equipment, was such as had never before been led against his enemies even by this warlike prince. It included in infantry a force slightly inferior in numbers to the army which had already assembled under the Earl of Surrey, amounting to eighty thousand men, who were chiefly Welsh and Irish levies; but in cavalry it much surpassed it. There were three thousand armed horse, or, as they* are denominated by an ancient monkish tactician, *equi cooperti*, "because," says he, "they were clothed from head to tail in iron coverings, or in body clothes composed of steel rings interwoven with each other." Besides these, Edward had a body of four thousand lighter cavalry, and previous to the march from Roxburgh, there arrived from Gascony five hundred knights and esquires, mounted on powerful horses of the large

* Triveti Annales, p. 312.

Flemish breed, and armed, both horse and man, in coats of mail of the finest temper and ornament. Impatient, at the head of such an army, to come to immediate action, the English monarch had given orders to march, when he was met by a bold remonstrance upon the part of his own barons, who peremptorily refused to advance a single step against the enemy, till the king had confirmed by his oath the charter of their liberties, and the charter of the forests; nor did they scruple to insinuate that they deemed this absolutely necessary, because the great seal had been affixed to these deeds when the monarch was beyond seas, and on this ground they dreaded he might not consider himself bound to observe them. Edward, although incensed at these unseasonable delays, did not esteem this a proper moment to resent them, and accordingly authorized the Bishop of Durham to swear by the soul of the king, that upon his return, having obtained by their assistance the victory over his enemies, he would instantly accede to their request. The nobility were obliged to be satisfied with this cautious and conditional promise, and the army moved on against the enemy.

The English monarch, aware, from former experience, of the difficulty of supporting so numerous a force on the resources of a hostile and exhausted country, had assembled a fleet of victualling ships, which were ordered to sail round the coast, and, having entered the Frith of Forth, to await there the arrival of the army. Against all these formidable preparations, Wallace had little to oppose but the resources of his own resolute

mind, which was fertile in military expedients, and well acquainted with that species of war which the nature of the country, and the circumstances in which he was placed, recommended as the best mode of resistance. His plan may be easily described. It was to avoid a battle, and to draw the immense force of Edward into the heart of a country which had been purposely wasted of its subsistence; to entangle it in the woods and marshes; when famine had brought disease and discontent, and murmurs had compelled to a retreat, to attack the army in its state of suffering and disorganization, to harass it at every step, to cut off its foraging parties, to storm its encampment at night, yet become invisible by day, to be ever on the watch, and ever near at hand, yet to keep his troops so concealed in the woods and mountain passes that it should be impossible for the English to bring him to an action: Such was the outline of the campaign as laid down by Wallace, and few will be disposed to question its wisdom. It constituted, in truth, the same mode of warfare which was afterwards so ably, and so successfully, pursued by Bruce, even after that great man was heartily supported by the principal body of the barons; but Wallace had still more cogent reasons for its adoption. These barons, he knew, were his enemies. Ever since his assumption of the office of governor, they had regarded his elevation with the utmost jealousy. His consistent and indefatigable exertions in defence of the liberty of the country, offered a perpetual, though silent, rebuke to their vacillation and selfishness; his measures for the arming and embodying the

whole disposable force of the realm, interfered with their feudal privileges, and trenched upon their individual rights over their vassals; and the unhesitating boldness and severity with which he inflicted punishment upon every offender or recusant, without respect to his rank or power, wounded their pride, and excited in their minds the bitter and mingled feelings of fear and resentment. We are not to wonder then, that, in the words of Fordun, it was the language of the Scottish nobility, "We will not have this man to rule over us."* Nor is it at all singular that Wallace, who was well aware of these sentiments, and anticipated that, on the first appearance of danger or defeat, the Scottish barons would be ready to desert him, should have adopted a system of defence which placed as little power as possible in their hands; and the result of the campaign fully demonstrated the wisdom of his calculations.

Edward, in the meantime, advanced into Scotland at the head of his immense army, laying waste the country, which he found perfectly defenceless and deserted, and eager for a sight of his enemies. This was a gratification, however, which he was not permitted to enjoy; for not only was no man or woman to be seen, but the very signs of life and habitation had disappeared. No herd was in the stall, no flocks upon the mountains, no swine, no poultry, in the farm granges; the houses remained, but they consisted of bare walls, for the furniture had been removed; and to an army which could carry little provisions

* Fordun, vol. ii. p. 172.

with it, and principally depended for support upon the plunder of the country through which it passed, the aspect presented by the untenanted apartments, the desolate hearths, and chimneys without smoke, was in a high degree chilling and disheartening. But this was not all: the green crops had been cut down and carried away; the hay or grain which could not be transported was reduced to heaps of blackened ashes, and the fields through which the English advanced, presented on every side the appearance of an arid and miserable desert. Edward now felt that he had to do not only with an experienced and able general, but with a whole people ready to sacrifice their individual wealth and comfort for their love of liberty; yet he trusted to his good fortune, and, anticipating the speedy arrival of his fleet, pressed forward into the country.

The first annoyance he met with, was an attack upon some of the rear divisions of his army by the garrison of Dirleton, a strong castle, at that time the property of the noble and ancient family of the De Vaux, and which, even in the ruins which still remain, presents an appearance of great feudal magnificence and extent. Two other smaller strengths in the same district, appear also to have occasioned him some disturbance; and he immediately dispatched Bishop Beck, to besiege and reduce Dirleton, and to destroy the neighbouring fortalices. This, however, was not so easy a task as had been anticipated. The castle proved too strong for the attack of the troops of the bishopric; and, after being repelled in an attempt to storm, their master deputed one of his

knights, Sir John Marmaduke, to require reinforcements, and inform himself of the king's pleasure. Edward dismissed this envoy with a very characteristic reply. "Go back," said he, "and tell Anthony that he shall have no reinforcements from me. Methinks he is somewhat pacific; and it may be right to behave so when he is acting the bishop: but, in his present business, let him forget his calling. As for you, Marmaduke," continued the king, "I have often been compelled to check you for an excess of cruelty and exasperation against your enemies, and, to say the truth, you are a relentless soldier; but begone now, be as relentless as you please; and take heed you do not see my face till these fortresses, which have caused me so much annoyance, are levelled with the ground."* At this moment the arrival of three English ships with provisions, brought a seasonable supply to the troops, which began to suffer all the miseries of want in an exhausted country; and the prelate, taking advantage of the recruited strength of his soldiers, led them to an assault of Dirleton, which proved successful.† The Scots soon after abandoned the other two fortalices, which, in obedience to the orders of the king, were dismantled; and having performed this service, the only point of arms, as it was then called, which had been achieved since the march of the army from Roxburgh, Anthony Beck rejoined the main body of the army.

The head-quarters of Edward were now at Kirkliston, a small village upon the river Amond,

* Hemingford, vol. i. p. 150. † Walsingham, p. 75.

about six miles' distance from Edinburgh, in the neighbourhood of which the Knights Templars possessed a preceptory and a considerable extent of property. It was situated within a few miles of the Frith of Forth; and he here determined to await the arrival of his fleet, despairing of being able to discover his enemy, or to compel him to a battle, and fearful, by advancing farther into the country, of being inextricably involved in the woods and morasses, and having his communication with his fleet and with the capital entirely cut off. The circumstances, indeed, in which he was already placed, were such as called for serious consideration. He commanded an army which exceeded a hundred thousand men, in a country which had been so unmercifully laid waste in the first instance by the Scots themselves, and afterwards by the invaders, that within the common range of the foraging parties not a blade of corn or fodder was to be collected, and not a hoof of cattle to be seen. If to remedy this distress, the commanders themselves, or the light cavalry in separate divisions, ventured to push forward to any great distance into the woods, they were intercepted and cut off by the enemy, who, though invisible, were constantly on the alert; or they were involved in unwholesome marshes and interminable woods, from which they found it exceedingly difficult to extricate themselves, and where they found little else than hardship, privation, and disease. In the meantime they could not fail to discover, that whenever an advantage presented itself, which called the enemy from their concealments, they appeared in considerable

strength and in good equipment, with the spirits and freshness of troops well supplied with every necessary, and confident in their leaders.

All this was very discouraging; a month having now elapsed without any appearance of the fleet, the troops began seriously to suffer from want; and it was evident, that if this state of things continued much longer, a retreat would be inevitable. Symptoms of discontent and mutiny, the usual consequences of such a state of privation in a great army, now began to show themselves; and at length the Welsh soldiers, whose minds were yet little reconciled to the yoke of Edward, broke out into open violence, slew eighteen English priests, and threatened to go over to the enemy. "Let them do so," said the king, with that intrepid calmness which never deserted him. "Let these forty thousand savage brawlers join the Scots. The day will come when I shall chastise them both." Yet, though confident and cheerful to his soldiers, the sagacious Plantagenet began to suffer intense anxiety. The want of provisions in a short time amounted to an absolute famine; the arrival of three ships, which brought the painful intelligence that the great body of the fleet were still detained by contrary winds at Berwick, only quickened the general tendency to insubordination. The division of their cargoes amongst the higher officers, and the knights and barons, produced envy and discontent in the great body of the troops; and even for these there was not enough to appease the cravings of hunger, or to ward off the rapid approaches of disease and ague. Under such circumstances, no

alternative was left to Edward; and, worn out by events which he could neither control nor counteract, he was compelled to issue orders for a retreat to Edinburgh, under the faint hope that if the wind changed, he might still meet his fleet at Leith, and after refreshing his army, recommence operations against the enemy.

It was at this critical juncture, when the plan of Wallace seemed to be crowned with complete success, and when his army, under the cover of night, were preparing to break down upon the English in their retreat, that the treachery of the Scottish nobles once more betrayed their country. Patrick, Earl of Dunbar, along with Umfraville, Earl of Angus, a baron of English family, but who possessed a Scottish estate and title, sought at daybreak the quarters of the Bishop of Durham, and brought the welcome intelligence that Wallace lay encamped within a short distance in the forest of Falkirk. It was his intention, they added, to attack the English encampment on the succeeding night, when he knew the army would be in confusion from the preparations for its retreat, which he was aware was about to commence, and which was the point at which he had resolved to commence his own offensive operations. On receiving this information, Edward could not conceal his joy. "Thanks be to God," cried he—"thanks be to God, who hath hitherto delivered me from every danger! They shall not need to follow me, for I shall instantly go and meet them."* Orders were now issued for an

* Hemingford, vol. i. p. 165.

immediate advance. The king himself was the first to put on his armour; and, mounting his horse, he rode from post to post in his wide encampment, hastening the preparations in person, speaking familiarly and cheerfully to the soldiers, chiding the dilatory, and urging on the merchants, sutlers, and camp followers to pack up their wares, and be ready to follow him. It was at sunrise that the Earl of Dunbar had brought the information; and at three o'clock the army was on its march from Kirkliston to Falkirk, astonished at the sudden and total change of plan, but aware, from the deliberate pace at which they advanced, and the dispositions which were made, that they were proceeding against the enemy.

Late in the evening, the host reached a level moor or heath, near Linlithgow, where they encamped for the night, but received orders to sleep in their armour, and to hold themselves in instant readiness. To use the words of an ancient English historian, whose information regarding the Scottish war was evidently derived from eye-witnesses, "each soldier slept upon the ground, and used none other pillow than his shield; each horseman had his horse, bridled and armed, beside him; and the horses themselves tasted nothing but cold iron, champing their steel bits for want of better fodder."* In the midst of his army lay the king himself, sharing no better couch than the meanest soldier, and sleeping on the ground in full armour, whilst his single attendant, a page, held his war-

* Hemingford, vol. i. p. 162. "Non gustabant quicquam nisi ferrum durum."

horse. The boy, however, had either sunk into slumber, or been careless, for Edward was awakened at midnight by a violent stroke upon his side; a cry suddenly rose that the king was wounded, and his soldiers, flocking round and seeing him bleeding and in pain, raised the alarm of treason, which quickly changed into a shout that the enemy was upon them. All this passed within a few minutes; and every man, expecting an immediate assault, stood to his arms; but a moment's examination explained the cause, and appeased the tumult. The war-horse of the king, inattentively tended by the boy, had put his foot upon the sleeping monarch; and the sudden sense of pain had occasioned an alarm both to the king and to those around, which subsided upon the occasion becoming known to the troops. Edward's wound, indeed, was found to be of a serious description; yet he insisted on mounting his horse, and, as the morning was breaking, gave orders for the army to march. They now defiled through the town of Linlithgow; and, on a rising ground in the distance, could discern the height completely lined with lances. Edward, without a moment's delay, advanced against them, but on reaching the summit, the enemy had disappeared.

As the sun had not yet risen, and the mists of night still hung densely over the neighbouring eminences, the king, on gaining the height, commanded his tent to be pitched, and it being the Feast of St Magdalen, bade the Bishop of Durham perform the mass for that day.* In the midst of

* 24th July.

this sacred service the sun rose, and as the curtain of mist was withdrawn, his rays glanced upon the steel phalanx of the Scots, drawn up on the side of a small hill. Between them and the ground occupied by the English, lay a pretty extensive valley, the bottom of which was covered by a marsh; and the armies were already so near, that the Scottish leaders were observed marshalling their host, and Edward had full leisure to examine the disposition adopted by Wallace. The main force of this intrepid leader lay in his infantry, who were lightly armed, and fought with long spears, besides short daggers and battle axes, which were used in close battle, and slung at the girdle. Upon these troops, which had been trained by Wallace under his own eye in almost daily war, he had full dependence; and the mode in which he arranged them was remarkable. They were divided into four circular masses, called in the military language of the period, schiltrons—a disposition which we find used by Harold, King of England, in the battle of Stamford Bridge, and which was admirably calculated to resist the shock of heavy cavalry.* "In these circles," says an ancient contemporary historian, "stood the spearmen, with their spears turned obliquely outwards, joined or closely linked man to man, with their faces fronting the circumference of each circle," and, to use an expressive phrase of another old chronicler, "their backs togiddere set."† Between circle and circle the intermediate space was occupied by the

* Heimskringla Af. Snorro Sturlusyni, vol. iii. p. 159.
† Hemingford, vol. i. p. 163. Langtoft.

Scottish archers ; and in the rear was placed the body of their cavalry, amounting to about a thousand horse, in which were John Comyn of Badenoch, and most of the nobles who had joined Wallace. The archers, chiefly yeomen from the forest of Ettrick, were commanded by Sir John Stewart of Bonkill, brother to the High Steward. Such was the disposition of Wallace ; and although his army was scarcely equal to the third part of the English force, and he could place little dependence upon the barons and their heavy-armed horse, still the nature of the ground was so strong, and the arrangement of his infantry so skilful, that Edward hesitated to attack him, and proposed that the army should pitch their tents, and give time both to the men and the horses to take some refreshment, as they had not broke their fast from three o'clock on the preceding day. This, however, was opposed by the English leaders, on account of the near vicinity of the enemy. " There is nothing," said they, " but a small rivulet between us."—" What would you then advise ?" asked Edward. " An immediate attack," was the answer. " The field and the victory will be ours."—" On them, then," replied the king. " I oppose not your wishes, and may the Holy Trinity be our help !"* The Earl Marshal of England accordingly, along with the Earls of Lincoln and Hereford, to whom the leading of the first division was intrusted, instantly advanced against the enemy. They were ignorant, however, of the marsh, which ran lengthwise along the front of the Scots position, and

* Hemingford, vol. i. p. 164.

found it necessary to make a circuit to the west, to extricate themselves from the difficulty. In the meantime, the Bishop of Durham came on at the head of the second division, which presented a warlike and glorious appearance. Twenty-six banners or standards belonging to his own principality, and the pennons of a hundred and forty knights,* who formed his ordinary personal suite, floated over the forest of spears, and glanced gorgeously in the sun. Anthony Beck, however, who had been trained to war, was aware of the nature of the ground, and as he advanced in firm array, declined his columns obliquely to the east, so as to avoid the marsh. His men getting impatient, the bishop attempted to keep them back till the king, who led the third division, should come up to their assistance. In this, however, he was opposed by Ralph Basset of Drayton, who bade him stick to his mass. "It becomes not a churchman," said the blunt soldier, "to teach the barons of England their lessons in the field; employ thyself, lord bishop, in thine own calling."—"On, then," replied the prelate, "if it must be so, and say the mass with swords in your hands! To-day we must all be soldiers." Saying this, he immediately charged the first circle of the Scottish infantry, whilst the Earl Marshal, having turned the marsh, attacked the second circle, and the king in person advancing with the third division, the battle became general. At this moment, when their services in charging the English archers might have been of the greatest as-

* Levy, Histoire de la Noblesse Héréditaire, p. 333.

sistance, the whole body of the Scottish cavalry rode off the field "without a blow given or taken," (to use the strong language of Hemingford,) and Wallace and his infantry were left alone.* The baseness of this desertion seems to have excited even the indignation of the enemy, who branded them as false cowards, to fly at the simple sight of the banner of England.

Wallace, however, who had probably been aware of what was to happen, encouraged his soldiers, reminding them that all now depended on their own firmness; and assuming, as he was often wont in battle, a tone of pleasantry, bade them dance as well as they were able, for he had done his part in bringing them to the ring. The great superiority of the English cavalry now appeared in their attack upon the Scottish bowmen, who occupied the spaces between the circles, and who, in point of strength and stature, are commemorated by the historians of both countries as the flower of the Scottish army. It was indeed almost impossible that, with their inferior numbers, light armour, and exposed position, they should repel the charge of a body of seven thousand horse, composed of the bravest and best equipped troops in the world; yet none of these foresters of Ettrick and Selkirk quitted the field; all were slain fighting on the ground where they first stood, bravely defending themselves with their short daggers against the steel-clothed chivalry of England and Gascony, and extorting

* Hemingford, vol. i. p. 164.—"Fugerunt Scottorum equestres absque ullo gladii ictu."

the admiration of their enemy by their uncommon gallantry, and the strength and beauty of their persons.* Amongst these bowmen were slain Sir John Stewart of Bonkill, and about twenty other knights who commanded them, nor does it appear that of the archers themselves a single man escaped. Still, however, the four circles of the Scottish spearmen remained unbroken, "standing up," to use the picturesque expression of an old English historian, "as strong as a castle walled with stone, with their spears point over point, so thick and close together that it was fearful to behold; and the array seemed so impenetrable, that it was commonly said no living men could pierce through them, though you mustered the bravest in England from Berwick to Kent.†" Nor is it at all unlikely, that had Wallace been attacked solely by horse, the form into which he had thrown his men, might have rendered an attack, if they stood firm, entirely abortive. But the Plantagenet's archers were far more destructive than his cavalry, and the showers of arrows which fell thick and heavily on the foremost ranks of the Scottish spearmen, slew and wounded multitudes, whose light armour was ill fitted to resist the strength of the English bow. Against this dreadful weapon of attack there was no defence; the circles offered a fair and certain mark to the enemy, whilst they themselves were far beyond the reach of the Scottish spear, and

* "Homines elegantis formæ et proceræ staturæ." Hemingford, vol. i. p. 165.

† Langtoft, vol. ii. p. 305.

Wallace's own bowmen of Selkirk and Ettrick had been cut to pieces by the cavalry. As the columns, too, of the English archers slowly advanced, their showers of arrows, discharged from a lesser distance, and with a more level aim, became more deadly and intolerable. It was now, when he saw his friends and soldiers falling thickly around him, that Wallace felt, with the deepest indignation and anguish, the treachery of Comyn and the other nobles. They, by one vigorous charge upon the English archers, might have restored the day. Sixteen years after this, at Bannockburn, a body of five hundred horse broke and routed a more numerous body of English bowmen, and a thousand heavy-armed cavalry could have found little difficulty in performing the same manœuvre at Falkirk; but the Scottish horse had fled, as we have seen, upon the first appearance of the English standard; and the fatal phalanxes of the archers, coming nearer and nearer, made such havoc in Wallace's circles, that the whole of the first or exterior rank were struck down and slain. The English cavalry now charged through the wide gaps which were made by their fall, and, having once broken into the centre, wrought a dreadful slaughter.* Macduff, along with his vassals from Fife, was slain, and with him fell Sir John Graham of Dundalk, a leader of tried courage and experience, who was much beloved, and deeply lamented, by Wallace. It was now evident that the battle was completely lost, and that nothing but retreat could save the

* Hemingford, vol. i. p. 165.

relics of his army from entire destruction. The Scottish leader accordingly exerted himself to keep together the broken remains of his circles, and retiring slowly upon Callander Wood, was able to defend his rear, till he gained that extensive forest, into which the English did not think it prudent to follow him. Sir Brian de Jaye, however, the master of the Scottish Templars, disdained such caution, and paid for it by his life; for, becoming swamped in a miry ford in Callander Wood, the weight of his barbed horse and steel armour rendered it impossible for him to extricate himself, and Wallace's men, turning round, "slew him," says Langtoft, "in a wood called Kalenters."* He was the only man of note who fell that day on the English side. Indeed from the circumstances under which the battle was fought, it is evident that the loss on the side of Edward must have been very trifling. That of Wallace, on the contrary, was severe, and may be estimated, at the lowest computation, to have amounted to fifteen thousand men.† The body of Sir John Graham was interred, by the Scots, in the churchyard at Falkirk, where his monument is still shown to the traveller.‡

* Langtoft, vol. ii. p. 306.

† Tyrrel's History of England, vol. iii. p. 130.

‡ Originally, like the common knightly monuments of the thirteenth century, it appears to have been an oblong sarcophagus, on the top of which was placed the recumbent figure of the warrior, in his full armour, with his hands closed upon his breast in the attitude of prayer. The tomb, however, had been destroyed by some accident, and nothing but the figure of the knight preserved; to defend

Immediately after the battle, the king dispatched an advanced division of the army to ravage the county of Fife, which, on account of the brave resistance of Macduff at Falkirk, was treated with extreme severity. He himself proceeded with the rest of the host to Stirling, which the Scots had occupied in their retreat. Edward, instead of meeting here with any supplies for his troops, who were now grievously suffering from famine, found the whole city in flames, and the adjacent country wasted and plundered by the Scots themselves. The convent of the Dominicans, however, a noble and extensive building of stone, stood uninjured amid the general devastation; and here the king, who still suffered pain from the stroke of his horse, remained for fifteen days, looking eagerly for the arrival of his fleet. Meanwhile another division entered St Andrews, which they found in the same condition as Stirling—deserted by its inhabitants, and reduced to ashes. After this they pushed on to Perth, then a place of some trade, but where the patriotism of the burghers had

which from farther injury, a flat gravestone was placed above it, with an epitaph commemorating his courage and fidelity to Wallace. This gravestone in time having become defaced, another was placed above it; which second, failing in its turn, has been covered up by a third: so that if this contention between time and posterity goes on much longer, the good Graham bids fair to be ground to powder under the weight of his posthumous reputation. The last stone was placed over the grave by the late William Graham of Airth. The ancient inscription is as follows:—

"Mente manuque potens, et Vallæ fidus Achates,
Conditur hic Gramus, bello interfectus ab Anglis."

consented to the same sacrifice—burning their houses, and destroying their property with their own hands, rather than that they should afford shelter or support to their invaders. Edward now felt with deep mortification that, unless his supplies arrived within a few days, to maintain his army in the enemy's country was impossible. At the very moment when he had triumphed over his adversary, he saw the fruits of his victory about to be wrested from him. The whole extent of Stirlingshire, Menteith, Clackmannan, Fife, and the country as far as Perth, were reduced almost to a desert; and having waited in vain for some intelligence of his fleet till symptoms of disaffection again began to evince themselves amongst his barons, he found himself at last compelled to issue orders for a retreat. Calling in, therefore, his scattered divisions, he left a garrison in Stirling castle, which he had repaired during his stay; and with the main force of his army fell slowly back upon Abercorn near Queensferry, where he entertained a last hope of receiving news of his ships, or procuring supplies, at least, from some individual vessels, which he trusted might have been able to beat up against the contrary winds, and make their way from Berwick. In this, however, he was finally disappointed; and the king, after having advanced to Glasgow, and through Clydesdale to Lanark, proceeded against the castle of Ayr, which was then occupied by Bruce Earl of Carrick, who, during the last campaign, appears to have remained neutral, shutting himself up in his own territories, and refusing to join either the party of Wallace or of Edward. The King of

England, however, he knew well was not of a disposition to excuse such vacillating conduct; and indeed the object of Edward in directing his march upon Ayr, seems to have been principally to waste the territory of Bruce. This potent baron, therefore, dreading the resentment which he had provoked, set fire to his castle of Ayr, and took refuge in the fastnesses of Galloway; and Edward, after a hard struggle of fifteen days against the famine which now grievously afflicted his troops, was compelled to retreat through Annandale to Carlisle, where he was left by the Earls of Norfolk and Hereford, who disbanded their forces and returned home; the king, with the remainder of his army, pursuing his march to Durham. In his progress through Annandale, he made himself master of the strong castle of Lochmaben, which, after a short resistance, the Scottish garrison yielded upon favourable terms; and with this solitary success, the only fruit of the victory at Falkirk, the campaign concluded.

Although defeated, therefore, in a sanguinary battle, Wallace had cause for satisfaction, and the Scottish people for gratitude, in watching the results of that plan of operations, which they had followed by the advice of their leader. Their devotedness in wasting the country, and sacrificing their individual comfort and personal property to the great cause in which they were engaged, had compelled the King of England to retreat at the very moment when victory seemed to lay the country at his feet, and expose it to indiscriminate subjugation; the strong hand of famine had snatched the ideal triumph from his

grasp, when he imagined he had permanently secured it; and he became sensible of that great truth, which, amid their insatiate lust of dominion, and their wreckless contempt of human life, ought to be written, "with sharp pens and bloody ink," upon the selfish bosom of every conqueror, that superior numerical force may for a time overwhelm or break the spirit of a brave people—but that, if animated by a sincere love of liberty, and ready to sacrifice their lives in the cause, such a people can never be subdued. The event, indeed, showed this in the most striking manner; for Edward had not remained many days at Durham, before he received intelligence that the Scots had again resumed hostilities, upon which, with an ardour and resolution which would have been admirable in a better cause, he marched rapidly back to Tinemouth, and from thence to Coldingham, near Beverley.* His troops, however, were worn out by famine and distress; a great proportion of his barons and knights had already disbanded their vassals, and returned to their homes; and to recommence the campaign at this late season, with the exhausted remains of his army, would have been incurring the greatest risk, and leading to almost certain discomfiture. He contented himself, therefore, with issuing his writs appointing his barons to meet him, with their full feudal strength, at Carlisle, on the day of Pentecost. Amongst the barons thus summoned, we find Patrick Earl of March, and his son, Patrick of Dunbar, the Earl of Angus, Gilbert de Umfra-

* Hemingford, vol. i. p. 167.

ville, Alexander de Baliol, and Simon Fraser—all of them Scottish nobles, who had abandoned, in wounded pride or selfish despondency, the party of Wallace, and attached themselves for the time to the service of England.*

On his return to Carlisle, Edward held a parliament, in which, as a reward for their services in the late campaign, he bestowed upon his barons and chief leaders many of the estates of the Scottish nobility, which he declared forfeited on account of their rebellion. This, however, was an extraordinary proceeding; for Edward and his army knew well that at this moment he did not possess a foot of land in Scotland, which, with any confidence, he could call his own; and the barons to whom these grants were made, were perfectly aware that, to be available, they must win them by the sword. We are not to be surprised, then, at the expression of Hemingford, a contemporary English historian, that the wide districts which he now assigned to his earls and barons, were grants in hope, not in possession.† It was absolutely necessary, however, for the king to allay the discontent which prevailed amongst his nobility; for they complained loudly of having sustained, in the late campaign, the most grievous loss, both in men and horses; they were jealous of the perpetual deceit and evasion with which Edward treated their demands for the corroboration of the great charter, and the charter of the forest; and they began to fear that,

* Madox's History of the Exchequer, c. 16, sect. 5.

† Hemingford, p. 167.

with so obstinate an enemy as the Scots, the king's wars would be as interminable, as his ambition was unbounded.

If, however, the result of this last campaign rendered it evident to Edward that much was still to be achieved before he could call Scotland his own, the lesson which it afforded to Wallace was equally mortifying and decisive : it convinced him that the prejudices of the Scottish nobility against his elevation to the supreme power in the state, were insuperable.* It was a dignity which, if we are to believe the evidence of an ancient historian, he did not himself desire. He found it impossible, with any chance of success, to lead an army against the King of England, of which the greater part of the leaders were ready to desert him, upon the slightest cause of dissatisfaction, or to betray him, upon the first favourable opportunity, into the hands of the enemy. The feudal fetters of that system which bound the armed vassals and free tenantry to follow the banner of their lord upon whatever side it was found, he discovered to be too strong for even his iron hand to break or wrench asunder ; and the selfish principles which had hitherto animated a great part of the Scottish barons, leading them to sell the liberty of their country for the security of their own estates, were, as it appeared to him, too deeply rooted in their constitution, to be opposed with any ultimate hope of success. To these causes of despondency were added serious fears for his own safety. A strong faction of the nobles had been formed

* Fordun, vol. ii. p. 174.

against him, who were not content with opposing his measures for the public safety, but animated by the keenest feelings of personal injuries, and determined to complete his ruin. There can be little doubt, from all that we know of the character of Wallace, that, during his exertions for the expulsion of the English from Scotland, he had used the high authority committed to him with stern and unbending severity;—that he had insulted the pride, and despised the remonstrances, and not unfrequently inflicted punishment and imprisonment upon the persons, of the higher barons; and the defeat at Falkirk, the assumption of the office of governor, and the alleged abuses of which he had been accused, now gave his enemies a handle against him, of which, he was well aware, they would not be slow to avail themselves. It was accordingly asserted, soon after the battle of Falkirk, that a resolution had been taken to bring him to trial for high treason, on the ground of his having usurped the chief authority in the realm, and disposed of the persons and property of the subjects, without the consent of the Estates; and he was well aware that his great popularity with the body of the nation would avail him little, if the nobles were to be his judges. Influenced by such motives, he embraced the resolution of voluntarily abandoning a dignity, which he could no longer retain with advantage to the country, or with safety to himself; and, not long after the defeat at Falkirk, having assembled his friends, and invited the nobles to a conference at the Water of Forth, he

solemnly resigned the office of governor, declaring that he would rather return to the condition of a simple knight, and give up the management of the state to whoever chose to assume it, than remain at perpetual variance with the nobility, and thus occasion the destruction of the faithful commons of Scotland.*

Immediately after this demission of Wallace, a perplexing obscurity involves his history. The evidence of contemporary chronicles, and the light to be derived from authentic muniments, are alike lost and extinguished; and, till we arrive at his death in 1305, the interval, which embraces the period of seven years, can only be filled up by conjecture. One of the earliest Scottish chroniclers, whose honest narrative betrays little disposition to indulge, like some of his later brethren, in the romance of history, thus concludes the brief account which he has given of his public life. "I have heard it stated," says he, "that relations of his worthy and courageous exploits have been drawn up at great length; and yet, I believe that, many though these narratives be, they do not embrace all the deeds that he wrought in his day—and indeed, he who would

* Wynton, vol. ii. p. 102.

"For better he had to lyve simply,
Na undyr sic dowt in senyhowry;
Na the lele comownys of Scotland,
He wald nocht had peryst undyr his hand.
He rather chose to spend his life
In simple state, than gage in strife
With lordly power and barons might,
Who held him long in high despite;
And caused his brave and faithful band
Of the true commons of the land,
To perish underneath his hand."

undertake to recount all his 'deeds of price,' would find himself engaged in the composition of a very large work; as for myself, I have neither leisure nor genius enough to include them in this chronicle."* That the worthy Prior of Lochleven did not find leisure to interweave into the homely but veracious body of his chronicle some of those noble deeds of price, which, upon his authority, we may be certain, were performed by Wallace, must be matter of deep regret to every one who is interested in the history of the liberty of an ancient people. Wynton lived at a period when it would have been comparatively easy to ascertain their authenticity, to have stript them of the brilliant colours in which they were invested by the credulity of his countrymen, and to have transmitted them in their heroic simplicity to posterity. Guided by such an author, we should then have been able to acquaint ourselves with the history of this remarkable man, after his voluntary resignation of the supreme power; we might have followed his career when he relapsed into the condition of a private baron, and continued (according to the assertion of one ancient historian) to give the benefit of his experience and advice to the very men whose jealousy had compelled him to the

* Wynton, vol. ii. p. 102-103.

"Of his gud dedes and manhad,
Gret gestis I hard say ar made,
Bot sa mony, I trow nocht
As he in-til his dayis wroucht,
Hym worthyd a gret buk to wryte:
And all that to wryte in here,
I want bathe wyt and gud laysere."

demission of his high office; or we might have travelled with him to the court of France, where he is stated, by the same writer, to have risen into high favour with the French monarch, and to have increased his character for personal prowess, by his successes against the pirates who then infested the seas, and were the terror of the merchants of Europe;* but these researches, in the want of the only documents which ought to direct our progress in the discovery of historical truth, it would be worse than unprofitable to pursue. I may only remark that there is a strong presumption in favour of the accuracy of the story that Wallace left the country, and went to the continent, in the undoubted fact, that we have no authentic evidence of his holding even a secondary command, or indeed being engaged in actual warfare in Scotland with the English, from this period till his death. The assertion, also, that his representations to the French king, and the favour which this monarch entertained towards him, had an influence upon the transactions which took place between the governments of France and England, and on the conduct of Edward towards Scotland, is in some degree confirmed by the fact that Philip did, at this period, exert himself to bring about a pacification between the Scots and their inveterate enemy the King of England; whilst at the same time, he succeeded in procuring the liberation of the unfortunate Baliol, whose authority, it will be remembered, Wallace had always acknowledged and supported,

* Fordun, vol. ii. p. 176.

as that of his true and lawful sovereign. But this is mere presumption. There is no allusion to the name of Wallace in the state papers and diplomatic conferences which then took place between France and England. The researches of the historians and antiquarians of France, amongst whom are many men of genius, who have left few sources of their national annals unexplored, have discovered no traces either of Wallace or the pirate Longueville, in the records or the chronicles of the times; and, until some better and more authentic light is thrown upon this dark portion of his career, than is to be derived from his minstrel biographer, we must hesitate to mingle the creations of romance with the colder but purer substance of legitimate history.

There is one reflection, however, upon this demission of the supreme power by Wallace, which necessarily arises in the mind. He had now possessed the highest authority in the state for two years. After the battle of Stirling, at the time of his great invasion of England, and previous to the battle of Falkirk, he was at the head of an army, which, had he been personally ambitious, and willing, by the destruction of the ancient nobility, who had given him ample provocation, to have raised himself into perpetual power, would have enabled him either to effect his object, or at least to engage in the struggle with every prospect of success. That he was idolized by the people is certain: he was not only the bravest, but undoubtedly the ablest, military leader in Scotland; he saw the country

deserted and betrayed by her nobility; the legitimate sovereign a captive, and unable, had he been free, to defend his kingdom; whilst the hereditary aspirants to the crown had united themselves to England. Under such circumstances, if ever the personal ambition of a throne could be pronounced a noble infirmity, if ever there was a concurrence of events which could justify a subject in permitting his army to place upon his head a crown to which he had no hereditary claim, it was the crisis in which Scotland was placed in 1297. But he resisted, or rather his upright and patriotic spirit did not feel, the temptation. There is no evidence to show that his great services were rewarded even by the common grant of an estate, or that he ever followed the uniform practice of the times, by appropriating to his followers or to himself the ample territories which the repeated treasons of their proprietors legitimately placed at his disposal; and he returned into the ranks of private life, the moment he discovered that his elevation was not attended with any benefit to his country, with none other possessions or honours than those which had distinguished him when he left them: his rank as a knight, and his unconquerable resolution never to submit to a foreign power.

Upon the retirement of Wallace from the chief management of the state, the body of the Scottish nobles who still determined to continue the struggle against England, elected John Comyn of Badenoch to the office of Regent; and after a little while, Robert Bruce, Earl of Carrick, along with William Lamberton, Bishop of St Andrews,

and John Soulis, were associated with him in the same high dignity. It has been truly remarked by Hailes, in his Annals of Scotland, that *Bruce* acting as a brother guardian with Comyn, in the name of Baliol, is a historical problem of difficult solution; but a more particular consideration of it belongs to another of these lives. We shall there attempt to explain the motives by which Bruce's conduct at this time appears to have been regulated, and to investigate that seeming inconsistency which marks the earlier portion of his career: at present, it is enough briefly to observe, that although the new regents appear to have been sincere in their opposition to England, it was evident that the renunciation of Wallace had a fatal and paralysing effect upon the people. His being compelled by the nobles to give up the dignity of governor, amounted almost to an acknowledgment that he considered the cause as hopeless; and at the same time that they found themselves thus deprived of their only stay, they suffered the mortification of beholding Baliol, their lawful sovereign, through the mediation of the Pope and the King of France, liberated indeed from the Tower, but set free only to be transmitted to France under circumstances of peculiar indignity and contempt, stigmatized by Edward as a perjured man, and a seducer of the people; his English estates confiscated, his trunks and packages searched and plundered, and a receipt for the delivery of his person taken from the Pope's legate, the Bishop of Vicenza.

Immediately after this transaction, Edward, in 1299, conducted an expedition against Scotland;

but from the opposition and mutiny of his barons, the inclement season of the year, and the skill and obstinacy of the enemy, he found himself repeatedly baffled in his military operations; and it was not till in 1300, in 1301, and in 1303, he had led five successive armies into Scotland, that the spirit of the people was at last subdued; and the governors of the kingdom, Comyn and Bruce, after stipulating for the preservation of their lives, liberties, and lands, judged it necessary to abandon the defence of the country, and to submit to the conqueror. Upon these two barons the King of England contented himself with inflicting a pecuniary fine; but from the capitulation, Edward specially excepted such persons as had been more obstinate in their rebellion, and whom, on that ground, he reserved for a more signal punishment. In this roll of exceptions, we find the names of Wishart, Bishop of Glasgow; James, the Steward of Scotland; Sir John Soulis, Alexander de Lindsay, Simon Fraser, David de Graham, and William Wallace. To all of these persons, however, except Wallace, Edward, although he imposed upon them a severer punishment than was inflicted upon Comyn and Bruce, held out a solemn promise, that "their life and limbs should be safe." The severity consisted in a higher pecuniary fine, or a banishment from Scotland for a longer or a lesser term of years. To Wallace he would offer no terms, but those of a full and unconditional surrender; and the Scottish leader was too well aware of the unpardonable injuries which he had for so long a period inflicted on the English to trust to the mercy of

the victor. He determined, however, to make one effort to avert the meditated vengeance; and whilst he remained himself within the forest of Dunfermline, proposals for a surrender were transmitted to the monarch through the medium of his friends. The terms, however, which he offered, highly incensed this proud monarch. "When they brought his message," says Langtoft, "Edward was full grim, and curst him by the fiend as his forfeited traitor, proclaiming all to be traitors who dared to harbour or support him, and setting a price of four hundred merks upon his head, in consequence of which he gave up all hopes of peace, and fled with speed into the impassable moors and marshes, where he supported himself by robbery."*

Once more in his native mountains and forests, where he first commenced his warfare with England, and driven by hard necessity for his support to a life of adventure and plunder against the enemies of his country, amid the general desertion of the nobility, a few of his faithful friends and veteran soldiers still shared his toils and his perils; and it seemed not improbable, that, so long as their great leader survived, the hopes and the resistance of the people might yet be preserved; and that the Genius of the national freedom, although for a while shorn of his strength, might yet rise into renewed vigour, and cast the fetters from his limbs. But to this expectation, which yet lingered in the breasts of many of the friends of liberty, private treachery put an end; and Wal-

* Langtoft, pp. 324, 325.

lace was soon after delivered into the hands of his enemies.

Considerable obscurity involves the last scenes of the life of this extraordinary man; and amid the inventions of apocryphal historians, and the traditions which have arisen out of the indignation of his countrymen, it is difficult to discover the minute particulars which attended his betrayal to England. The general facts, however, are ascertained upon unexceptionable historical evidence, and cannot be controverted. It is certain that the principal agent in his capture was Sir John Menteith, a Scottish baron of ancient family, who had formerly served with Wallace, and enjoyed, it is said, much of his familiar confidence and friendship. This person employed as his inferior assistants, two individuals of the names of Mowbray and Haliburton; and by their means succeeded in bribing Jack Short, a servant whom Wallace generally employed about his person, to discover the place of his retreat.*

It appears that Wallace, after being hunted from covert to covert, had at last retreated to the strong and wooded country between Glasgow and Dumbarton, of which last place, the castle, one

* A state paper preserved in Ryley's Placita, exhibits to us the King of England in a state of restless anxiety for the apprehension of the last man who had defied his power, sending Sir John Mowbray into Scotland, accompanied by Haliburton, and the directions to Mowbray are clear and explicit. He is to watch over Haliburton, and see that he faithfully co-operates with the other Scotsmen then engaged in the attempt to discover and to seize their fugitive leader.

of the strongest posts in the country, had been committed to the keeping of Sir John Menteith. Although he had formerly joined him in his opposition to England, Menteith, who was uncle of Sir John Stewart of Bonkill slain at Falkirk, is reported to have threatened vengeance against Wallace, for what he termed a desertion of his nephew, upon that unfortunate day; and he, along with Mowbray and Haliburton, engaged so actively in the pursuit, that their endeavours were at length crowned with success.*

The tradition of the country still points out a ruinous mansion near Robroyston, in which the Scottish leader was surprised; and his minstrel

* An English contemporary chronicle thus describes the manner of his apprehension: " Sir John of Meneteth pursued William so hotly, that he took him when he deemed himself secure, in the company of his mistress, by means of the treason of his man Jack Short, who was the cause of his being taken. It was generally reported that Wallace had slain Jack's brother, which made him more willing to do his master that ill turn. Thus it is ever seen that a false traitor ends in a strange manner. If he trusts to his friends they *beguile him*, as William is *beguiled*, seized, and bound." † The Chronicle of Lanercost Priory, and the Scala Chronicle, both of them contemporary English authorities, are unfortunately silent as to the more minute particulars which attended the capture of the Scottish leader, but they agree in describing Sir John de Menteith as the agent who delivered him into the hands of Edward. When, therefore, we find the learned but partial annalist of Scotland representing the story of Menteith as a popular tradition, founded solely on Scottish authority, we can only lament that historical error should receive such respectable support.

† Langtoft, vol. ii. p. 329.

biographer has added a few circumstances, which are far from improbable. As Wallace slept, it is said, two soldiers stole into the room, and removed his arms and his bugle, whilst Menteith remained without. They then awoke and attempted to seize him; but although disarmed, he grasped an oaken stool in the apartment, and struck two of the soldiers dead at his feet. Menteith now showed himself—explained to him, that, as the building was surrounded by soldiers, escape was impossible, and pledged his honour, that if he would allow himself to be carried to Dumbarton, his life should be spared. He had accompanied the English, he said, for the purpose of using his influence in protecting his former associate from injury; but if he continued to resist, the house would be set on fire, and he must perish in the flames. Wallace then submitted to be made a prisoner, and trusting to his old acquaintance with Menteith, and to his word as a knight, accompanied him to Dumbarton, of which this Scottish baron was now governor for Edward.

The treachery of Menteith was now fully disclosed, and the accounts of his success were received throughout Scotland by one universal burst of indignation. "Cursed be the day of the nativity of John Menteith!" says Blair, the faithful chaplain of Wallace, in a fragment which has reached our time; "may his execrated name be for ever blotted from the Book of Life!" and the sentiment appears to have been as general as it was stern and unpitying. Meanwhile Wallace himself was cast into a dungeon, and heavily ironed, whilst intelligence of his capture was

transmitted to Edward, and immediate preparations begun for conducting him to England. His journey thither, although, to prevent the chance of a rescue, it lay through the most unfrequented route, from the crowds that flocked round, resembled more the progress of a conqueror, than that of a captive. All were anxious to obtain a sight of the formidable chief, who had so long defied the power of Edward; and when they reached the capital, the streets became so entirely blocked up by the multitudes of people, that an alarm seems to have been entertained for the safety of the prisoner; and, instead of proceeding to the Tower, they took him to the house of William Delect, a citizen of London, in Fenchurch street, where he was lodged. His fate had been determined on, long before his seizure, and, although the ceremony of a trial was gone through, Wallace knew from the first that he had nothing before him but death. This he prepared to meet with the calm and unaffected fortitude which had always distinguished him. On the eve of St Bartholomew, he was brought on horseback, with a splendid procession, to Westminster Hall. John de Segrave, Grand Marshal of England, and Geoffrey de Hartlepool, Recorder of London, headed the cavalcade. He was followed by the Lord Mayor, the Sheriffs, and the Aldermen, in their robes, accompanied by a brilliant concourse of barons and knights, with their attendants; and crowds of the trained bands and city officers guarding the prisoner.* In the midst rode Wal-

* Stow's Chronicle, p. 209.

lace on a sorry horse, bareheaded, heavily manacled, and clothed in a mean garment; but preserving, under these circumstances of studied indignity, that serene deportment, which, combined with his tall figure and manly countenance, commanded the admiration of all who beheld him. As he gazed on the crowd, or looked up to the windows and balconies which were thickly filled with the population of this splendid capital—the spectacle of so great a man in the power of his enemies, drew murmurs of involuntary pity from the multitude. His cruelty, his inveterate opposition, were forgotten; and the English, with the generosity of a high-minded people, saw nothing before them, but that spectacle which was so strongly calculated to awaken their sympathy;—a brave man bearing himself as became his character, under the pressure of inevitable misfortune. Such sentiments, however, did not extend to Edward, in whose character, composed otherwise of many good qualities, pity for a fallen enemy was never a very prominent feature. By his directions, Wallace was exposed to a meanness of insult, which is revolting to every better feeling. But he bore all without a murmur, supported by the consciousness of having discharged his duty to his country, and of dying, as he had lived, a free man. He was seated on a low bench in Westminster Hall; a crown of laurel was placed in mockery upon his head, as it was reported he had been heard to boast that he deserved to wear a crown in that place; and Sir Peter Mallorie, the king's justice, rising from his seat, impeached him as a traitor to his sovereign, the King of England; as having burnt

the villages and abbeys, stormed the castles, and slain the liege subjects, of his master. "To Edward," said Wallace, "I cannot be a traitor, for I owe him no allegiance; he is not my sovereign; he never received my homage; and whilst life is in this persecuted body, he never shall receive it. To the other points whereof I am accused, I freely confess them all. As governor of my country, I have been an enemy to its enemies. I have slain the English; I have mortally opposed the English king; I have stormed and taken the towns and castles which he unjustly claimed as his own. If I, or my soldiers, have plundered or done injury to the houses, or to the ministers of religion, I repent me of my sin—but it is not of Edward of England, that I shall ask pardon."* Upon this confession, he was immediately found guilty, and condemned to death. The sentence was carried into execution on the twenty-third of August, with every circumstance of refinement in cruelty. Having been dragged upon a hurdle, with his hands chained behind his back, to the foot of a high gallows, erected at the Elms in Smithfield, he was placed on the scaffold, surrounded by all the dismal apparatus of torture.† At this awful moment, he preserved an unshaken serenity. He requested the attendance of a priest to whom he might confess himself, and it is painful to learn that Edward, who was present, in a fit of obstinate and impotent resentment, denied him this

* Stow's Chronicle, p. 209. Langtoft, vol. ii. p. 329.
† Math. Westminster, p. 451.

last comfort. Winchelsea, however, Archbishop of Canterbury, who stood near the scaffold, boldly reproved the king for interfering with his temporal authority in a matter exclusively religious. "The church," said the faithful prelate, "will not suffer any of her penitent children, whatsoever may have been his guilt, or to whatever country or kindred he may belong, to request the offices of a priest in his last moments and to be refused, and I myself will officiate, since none other is so near." Saying this, he ascended the scaffold, received the confession, and gave him absolution, after which he departed for Westminster, unwilling to be a spectator of the cruelties which were to follow. At this moment Wallace intreated of Lord Clifford, who stood hard by, that a psalter, which had been taken from his person, should be restored, and the request was complied with. As his hands were chained, he desired a priest who was near him to hold it open; and it was observed, that during the whole time, he regarded the volume with a look of mingled devotion and affection. Even when he was taken down from the gallows, yet living and sensible, his eyes continued fixed upon the sacred book during the horrible process of embowelling which followed, till they were closed in death. This psalter had been his constant companion from his early years. It was probably the gift of his mother, or some dear friend, and had been kept about his person till he fell into the hands of his enemies. The execution was now closed by striking off the head, and separating the body

into four quarters.* The head was immediately placed upon London Bridge, and his quarters distributed through the country. The right arm was sent to Newcastle, the left arm to Berwick, the right leg to Perth, and the left to Aberdeen. "They hewed his body," says Langtoft, "into four quarters, which were hung up in four towns, as a warning to all who, like him, raised their standard against their lord, that their mangled remains would be gazed upon, instead of the gonfanons and banners which they had once so proudly displayed."† The cruel execution of Wallace, and the heroic spirit with which he vindicated the rights of a free people in his last moments, appear to have made a remarkable impression in England. The conduct of the Archbishop of Canterbury may not unfairly be taken as a criterion of the feelings of the higher classes, and it is well known that about this time the barons of England were disposed to look with feelings of favour and indulgence upon any manifestation of a spirit of independence. On the other hand, amongst the people, immediately after his death, there arose a report that his soul, without requiring any protracted purification in purgatory, had been immediately ushered into paradise; and an English monk declared that he had beheld, shortly before his execution, a vision of angels and blessed spirits,

* Walsingham, p. 90.

† MS. Chron. Lanercost, in Jamieson's Wallace, p. 405. Langtoft, vol. ii. p. 330.

ready to receive upon their celestial pinions the pure soul of the patriot, and to convey it to those mansions which are prepared for the martyrs of liberty.

But if such were the feelings which arose in England, it may be easily imagined that the sentiment produced by the execution, in his own country, was of a far deeper tone and character. From one extremity of the land to the other, a spirit of determined animosity, and an intense thirst of vengeance, were transmitted throughout the great body of the people, and the sight of the mangled remains of their favourite leader, as they were carried from London towards the north, only served to make them more fondly cling to his memory, and more deeply denounce the tyranny which had sacrificed so dear a victim upon its remorseless altar. There was not a spot connected with his life, that did not become hallowed in the eyes of his countrymen; and the devotedness which sacrificed every personal feeling to the great cause in which he died, was immediately repaid with a popularity which remains, after five centuries, superior to that enjoyed by any other Scottish worthy. Of this truth, there is a remarkable corroboration to be found in the romantic and secluded retreat where the author is now writing,*

* The Torwood still embraces an extent of nearly three hundred acres, mostly of oak copse. It is situated about five miles from Falkirk, and is the property of Major Dundas of Carron Hall. Carbrook, the seat of John Campbell, Esq., where this Life was written, appears originally to have formed a part of the ancient forest.

situated in the midst of the Tor Wood, an ancient and extensive forest, in the neighbourhood of which Wallace passed the years of his youth, and whose dark and then almost impenetrable recesses often afforded him an asylum when pursued by his enemies. In this forest, altered and curtailed in its dimensions as it must be by the lapse of so many centuries, the memory of the patriot is as fresh as when he first rose in resistance against Edward. Many years have not passed, since the relics of an immense and aged oak, within whose excavated trunk he had concealed himself, were pointed out to the traveller; and a youthful tree, which has been planted on the spot, is still fondly visited.* The name of Wallace, however, is not confined to any single district. Throughout every part of Scotland some traditions are to be found of his exploits, some remarkable scenes are pointed out as connected with his great struggle for liberty. Much, indeed, of all this is apocryphal; part decidedly untrue: but the admiration of his countrymen, which has thrown so rich a tint of the marvellous around his story, and transformed him from a patriot into a Paladin, has been favourable to the permanency of his reputation; for the bulk of mankind are ever more captivated by what is wonderful and romantic, than interested in the truth; and the records of the Scottish leader, engraven upon the rocks

* Thomas Walker, an intelligent and respectable mason, who lives on the spot, informs me that, when he measured the decayed trunk of Wallace's oak in 1785, it was forty-five feet in circumference.

and mountains of his native country, and taught amid such lonely solitudes by the fathers to their children, bid fair to be as immortal as those immutable features of nature with which he has become connected.

ROBERT BRUCE,

KING OF SCOTLAND.

Ah fredome is a noble thing,
Fredome mayks man to haiff liking;
Fredom all solace to man giffis,
He levys at ese that frely levys;
A noble hart may haiff nane ese,
Na ellys nocht that may him plese,
Gyff fredome failyhe; for fre liking
Is yharnit our all othir thing;
Na he that ay hass levyt fre,
May nocht knaw weill the propyrté,
The angyr, na the wrechyt dome
That is couplyt to foule thyrldome.

BARBOUR'S *Bruce*, Buke Fyrst, l. 225.

ROBERT BRUCE.

SECTION I.

Birth of Robert Bruce—Family of Bruce, of Norman Origin, acquire lands in Scotland in the time of David I.—Robert Bruce the Competitor for the Crown with Baliol—His son Bruce, Earl of Carrick, the companion of Edward I. in Palestine—His Romantic Marriage with Martha, Countess of Carrick—Their eldest son, Robert Bruce, King of Scotland—He is Educated in the family of Edward I.—Ambitious Designs of Bruce's father, the Earl of Carrick—On the Accession of Baliol, this Baron refuses to do him Homage—Resigns his Earldom of Carrick, and his lands in Scotland, to his son—Attempt to explain the Early Career of Bruce, and the Motives of his Apparent Inconsistency—His Conduct in 1296*—in* 1297*—in* 1298*—Abortive Attempt of Bishop Lamberton in* 1299 *to reconcile the Factions of Bruce and the Comyns—Bruce makes his peace with Edward I.—His Condition and Prospects at this time—Disappointed in his hope that Edward would raise him to the Supreme Power—Yet he retains his Influence with the King of England—Discontent and Indignation at the Condition of Scotland—State of this Country—Bruce enters into Associations with the Nobles, and organizes a Conspiracy against Edward—Admits Comyn to his Confidence—His Proposals*

to this Baron—Comyn betrays him to Edward—Perilous situation of Bruce—He flies from the English Court—Assembles his Friends at Lochmaben Castle—Meeting with Comyn in the Church of the Grey Friars at Dumfries—Bruce stabs him, and he is afterwards slain by his Attendants—Reflections on this Event—Bruce joined by Sir James Douglas—Crowned at Scone—Edward's great Preparations against him—March of the Army into Scotland—Defeat of Bruce at Methven by the Earl of Pembroke—Driven with a small band into the Highlands—Joined by his Queen and her Ladies at Aberdeen—Retreats with them into the interior of Breadalbane—Attacked and defeated by the Lord of Lorn at Dalree—Approach of Winter—Bruce sends his Queen with his Brother Nigel to Kildrummie—Passes Loch Lomond—Arrives in Kintyre—Retreats to the Isle of Rachrine—Calamitous Events in Scotland—Capture of his Queen—Execution of Nigel Bruce of Seton—The Earl of Athole—Sir Simon Fraser—Countess of Buchan confined in a Cage at Berwick—In the Spring, Bruce embarks at Rachrine, and makes a Descent on Carrick—Shuts up Percy in Turnberry Castle—Sir James Douglas recovers Douglas Castle—The "Douglas Larder"—Defeat and Death of Bruce's Brothers, Thomas and Alexander—Bruce Retreats into the Mountainous parts of Carrick—His various Escapes and Adventures—Defeated by Pembroke and Lorn—Pursued by Bloodhounds—Rejoined by his Friends—His Affairs revive, and he Defeats the English at Glen Fruan—Defeats the Earl of Pembroke at Loudon Hill—Death of Edward I.—Weak and capricious Administration of his Successor—Expedition of Bruce into the North of Scotland—Penetrates to Inverness—Reduces the whole Country—Dangerous Sickness of Bruce—His slow Recovery—Defeats David de Brechin at Inverury—Wastes the country of Buchan with Fire and Sword—Makes himself master of Aberdeen—Reduces the Castle of Forfar—Character of Edward Bruce—His brilliant Campaign in Galloway—Exploits of Sir James Douglas in Douglasdale—Character and Description of Douglas—Randolph taken Prisoner—His Haughty Interview with Bruce

—Sent to Prison—Reconciled to the King—State of the Western Highlands—Strength and Resources of the Lord of Lorn—Bruce's Invasion of Lorn—Defeats him, and completely Reduces his Country—Siege of Dunstaffnage—Submission of the Lord of the Isles.

Robert Bruce, King of Scotland, was born in the year 1274, on the feast of the translation of St Benedict, being the 21st of March. His family, like many of the noblest in Scotland, was undoubtedly of Norman origin. In an ancient roll, containing the names of those knights and barons who came into England with William the Conqueror, we find that of Bruys especially mentioned; and in a far nobler and more authentic record, Doomesday Book, a family of this name are seen possessed of lands in Yorkshire. When David I., in the year 1138, conducted into England that unfortunate expedition, which terminated in his defeat on Cutton Moor, near Northallerton, the English barons previous to the battle sent a message to the King of Scotland, by Robert Brus of Cleveland, a Norman knight, who, besides his large estates in England, was possessed of an extensive property in Annandale, in Scotland, which he held by the tenure of military service. David I. and the baron who now attempted to bring about a pacification, had been companions in arms at the court of Henry I. of England; and when the Scottish prince succeeded to the throne, he appears with a generous and enlightened policy to have endeavoured to introduce civilisation into his ruder kingdom, by encouraging the emigration of the Normans into his new dominions. Amongst other ancient houses, accordingly, the

family of Brus, or de Brus, received lands in Annandale, upon which many of their vassals and lesser barons, who were bound to their banner by the strong ties of the feudal system, took up their residence; and although Robert Bruce of Cleveland appears to have been more attached to England than to Scotland, and died at his manor of Giseburn, in Yorkshire, which he transmitted to his eldest son Adam, his youngest son Robert, upon the death of his father, became proprietor of his estates in Annandale, which were confirmed to him in a charter of William the Lion, yet extant.* The son of this baron, also named Robert, married Isabella, a natural daughter of William the Lion; and his great-grandson, who bore still the same name, took to wife Isabel, the second daughter of David, Earl of Huntingdon, brother of William the Lion. The eldest son of this marriage was Robert Bruce, the competitor for the crown with Baliol. He married Christian, the daughter of Gilbert de Clare, Earl of Gloster, one of the most powerful barons in the court of Henry III.; and of this union was born to him Robert Bruce, his eldest son, who accompanied Edward I. of England to the holy war, and appears to have enjoyed the friendship and confidence of this able monarch, when his schemes of conquest

* It may be mentioned as a circumstance which confirms, in a striking manner, the above remark regarding the policy of David I., that the names of the witnesses to this famous instrument, Moreville, Fitz Alan, Umfraville, Lovel, and De Hay, are all without exception of Norman origin.†

† Leland Collect. vol. i. p. 207.

were yet undeveloped, and the defence of the holy sepulchre and the extermination of the infidels formed the master passion of his soul. Another crusading companion, who accompanied Bruce to Palestine, was Adam de Kilconcath, Earl of Carrick, who was slain in Palestine, leaving his Countess Margaret, a young and beautiful widow, without children. This lady was the only child of Nigel, or Niel, Earl of Carrick, and Margaret, a daughter of Walter, the High Steward of Scotland; she was therefore Countess of Carrick in her own right, and on his return from the Holy Land she married Robert Bruce, who thus became Earl of Carrick, and Lord of the Castle of Turnberry.

The circumstances attending this alliance were of a romantic and singular description. It appears that a short time after his return from the crusade, Bruce was riding through the beautiful domains of Turnberry Castle, the property of the widowed Countess of Carrick, who, in consequence of the death of her husband, had become a ward of the crown. The noble baron, however, if we may believe an ancient historian, cannot be accused of having visited Turnberry with any design of throwing himself in the way of the heiress of Carrick; and indeed any such idea in those days of jealous wardship would have been highly dangerous. It happened, however, that the lady herself, whose ardent and impetuous temper was not much in love with the seclusion of a feudal castle, had come out to take the diversion of the chase, accompanied by her women, huntsmen and falconers; and this gay cavalcade

came suddenly upon Bruce, as he pursued his way through the forest, alone and unarmed. The knight would have spurred his horse forward, and avoided the encounter, but he found himself surrounded by the attendants; and the Countess herself, riding up, and with gentle violence taking hold of his horse's reins, reproached him in so sweet a tone for his want of gallantry in flying from a lady's castle, that Bruce, enamoured of her beauty, forgot the risk which he run, and suffered himself to be led away in a kind of triumph to Turnberry.* He here remained for fifteen days, and the adventure concluded, as might have been anticipated, by his privately espousing the youthful countess without having obtained the concurrence of the king, or of any of her relations.† Alexander III., however, although at first indignant at this bold interference with

* This castle, the place where, there is strong reason to believe, Bruce passed his infancy, is an object of much interest. It is finely situated on a small promontory in the barony of Turnberry and county of Ayr. Its site overhangs the Clyde, and commands a varied and extensive view of that noble estuary. Upon the land side it looks over a rich plain of about six hundred acres, which is bounded by hills rising in a beautiful amphitheatre. Little now is known as to the extent of this ancient building. There still remain the vestiges of a fosse and part of the buttresses of the drawbridge. There is a passage also which opens to the sea, arched above, and leading to a large apartment in the castle, which by tradition is said to have been the kitchen. The ruins in their present state cover an acre of ground.—Biggar's Account of the Parish of Kirkoswald. Stat. Account of Scotland, vol. x. p. 493.

† Fordun a Goodal, vol. ii. p. 114.

the rights of the crown, was a benevolent prince, and on the payment of a large feudal fine extended his forgiveness to Bruce.

The eldest son of this marriage of sudden and romantic love was Robert Bruce the younger, Earl of Carrick, and afterwards King of Scotland. The second son was Edward Bruce, Lord of Galloway, who was crowned King of Ireland in 1316; and, besides this regal issue, the Countess of Carrick—who appears to have proved a faithful and affectionate wife—bore to her husband three more sons and seven daughters. With the cruel and unmerited fate of the sons, we shall become acquainted in the course of this biography. By the daughters, it is important to observe, that the Earl of Carrick became connected with some of the most ancient and powerful families in Scotland. Isabella, the eldest, married Thomas Randolph of Strathdon, High Chamberlain of Scotland, and bore to him the famous Randolph, Earl of Murray, Regent of Scotland—a name only inferior to that of Bruce. Mary, the second daughter, became the wife of Sir Niel Campbell of Lochow, the companion of Wallace; and to her second husband took Sir Alexander Fresel, or Fraser, High Chamberlain of Scotland. Christian, the third daughter, gave her hand first to Sir Christopher de Seton, and, on his death, to Sir Andrew Moray of Bothwell, who was also bred to war by Wallace, and became afterwards Regent of the kingdom. The other daughters were, Matilda—married to one of the most potent of the northern barons, Hugh, Earl of Ross—and Margaret and Elizabeth, who were united to the

families of Carlisle of Torthorwald and Dishington; whilst the youngest daughter, whose name has been lost to history, became the wife of David de Brechin.*

There is the strongest probability that Bruce passed his earliest years at the Castle of Turnberry, the residence of his mother, and that although his father and his grandfather were accustomed to consider themselves as much English as Scottish barons, the impression made upon the mind of the youthful hero by the wild and romantic scenery of this feudal domain, gave him a decided prepossession for Scotland—a feeling, indeed, destined to be afterwards strengthened by ambition, and by the recollections of danger and of glory; but which, probably, never lost that fresh glow of preference and attachment with which we fondly cling to the scenery where we have spent the careless and happy years of boyhood. When he advanced, however, into youth, his father thought it right to remove him from Scotland to the English court, and the friendship which at this time subsisted between the Earl of Carrick and Edward I. induced this monarch to adopt his son, and receive him into the royal household.† In this manner, by one of those extraordinary and improbable events by which an all-wise Providence is ever defeating the shallow calculations of human wisdom—to Edward was committed the education of his future

* Douglas's Peerage of Scotland, vol. i. p. 349.

† Scala Chronicle, in Leland's Collectanea, vol. i. p. ii.

mortal enemy; and in the palace and household of this great prince, young Bruce was trained up in those exercises of war and chivalry, for which he soon showed an aptitude and enthusiasm which left most of his fellow-pupils far behind him.

On the death of Alexander III., in 1286, we have already seen that Bruce's father, the Earl of Carrick, a man of warlike habits and great ambition, engaged in a conspiracy with some of the most powerful of the Scottish and English nobles, which, although exceedingly obscure, had for its object his accession to the crown, as the descendant of David, Earl of Huntingdon. His father, Bruce the elder, who afterwards, in 1291, came forward as the competitor with Baliol, appears, from his advanced age and attachment to England, to have resigned at this moment his right of succession to his son; and there is ample evidence, in documents of unquestionable authenticity, that, for two years subsequent to the death of Alexander, the country, divided into parties which violently supported the rival claims of Bruce and Baliol, was exposed to all the desolating miseries of a civil war, in which hostilities were carried on by the Earl of Carrick; but of which the particulars, nay, the very existence, have escaped the research of all the Scottish historians.* He afterwards, however, renounced

* Decided evidence of this war, which does not appear in Fordun, Wynton, or any of the more ancient historians, was first discovered in those highly valuable but unpublished documents, the Accounts of the great Chamberlains of Scotland:—Excerp. E. Rotulo Compotorum Tempore Custodum Regni, p. 62. "Computum Johannis Cumyn

his ambitious designs, and, along with the rest of the Scottish barons, consented to the accession of the Maiden of Norway, and the marriage of this infant princess with the son of Edward I. On her death, it has been seen that his father, the Competitor, came forward, and, having submitted his hereditary claim to the throne to the decision of Edward, had the cause adjudged against him by the preference of Baliol, as the descendant of the eldest daughter. The motives which influenced Edward in this solemn and important transaction are strikingly pointed out by an ancient historian. "The King," says he, "having heard the opinion of the commissioners, which was favourable to Bruce, called his privy council, and asked their judgment upon the matter.—'I dread,' said Anthony Beck, the Bishop of Durham, 'the accession of a man of such spirit and consequence as Bruce. He is, by his noble birth and family connexions, one of the most influential barons in England; and we all know the distress and annoyance already given to our country by the strength of Scotland, and the ambition of its kings.' On hearing this," continues the historian, "Edward exclaimed, 'By the blessed rood, there is wisdom in what thou sayest; the matter must go differently than we had at first intended.' The consequence of this advice was, the decision in favour of Baliol, which gave such deep offence to Bruce's friends, that some of the most power-

de Buchan Vicecomitis de Wigton—Non respondet, eo quod terra jacet inculta propter guerram motam post mortem regis per Comitem de Carric."—Ibid. pp. 56, 57, 58.

ful did not hesitate openly to express their dissatisfaction. Amongst these was the Earl of Gloucester, brother to Bruce's wife, and one of the proudest of the English barons. When the sentence had been pronounced, he took the Lord of Annandale by the hand, and, confronting the king, bade him remember, that he one day would be judged for the unjust judgment which he had then pronounced."* For this bold reproof, and the support which he had already given to the Earl of Carrick, Gloster fell under the displeasure of the king, and was dispossessed of his estates;† but he afterwards regained the royal favour, and married the daughter of his sovereign.

At the time when the award of Edward placed the crown of Scotland on the head of Baliol, the elder Bruce was far advanced in years, his son the Earl of Carrick being in the prime of life, and his grandson, Robert Bruce, a youth of eighteen. When required to do homage for his possessions in Scotland to the new monarch of that country, the competitor, who regarded himself as possessed of an inalienable right to the crown, indignantly refused. "I am Baliol's sovereign, not Baliol mine," said the proud baron; "and rather than consent to such a homage, I resign my lands in Annandale to my son, the Earl of Carrick." Carrick himself was a still prouder and more ambitious man than the father, and as steadily renounced all idea of holding lands of Baliol. The principles of the feudal law, however,

* Fordun a Hearne, pp. 956, 958.

† Gough's Camden's Britannia, vol. i. p. 265

rendered it necessary that he should either divest himself of his estate, or do homage for it; wherefore, calling for his son Robert, "at that time," says the Scala Chronicle, "a young man in King Edward's chamber," he resigned to him his property in Annandale. The youthful baron, having accepted his father's lands, which, by the feudal principles, carried the title along with them, became Earl of Carrick, and immediately did homage to John Baliol as his lawful sovereign. The elder Bruce, the grandfather of the future King of Scotland, died at his castle of Lochmaben, in 1295, and was succeeded by his son, the ex-Earl of Carrick, who, in his character of an English baron, continued a faithful servant of Edward; and at his death, which did not happen till 1304, transmitted his English estates, which were of immense extent, to his son, the Earl of Carrick, who had then attained the mature age of thirty.

It has been often said, that it is difficult to reconcile the early career of Bruce to any fixed principles of action; and historians have abandoned it as apparently capricious, obscure, and incapable of explanation. It may, however, be suspected, that in adopting this opinion, they have not investigated with sufficient attention the circumstances in which he was placed. If we attend to these, and take into consideration the years of Bruce at the time he was called into public life, we shall find that what has been stigmatized as capricious resolves itself into a policy and sagacity highly remarkable in so young a man. Naturally bold and ambitious, his first object was to attain the crown which he had been taught,

by the example both of his father and his grandfather, to consider his hereditary right; and for the accomplishment of this great design, there was no sacrifice to which he was not ready to submit. To carry his scheme into execution, however, it was absolutely necessary that he should concentrate in his own person as much feudal power and influence as it was possible for him to acquire —that he should not only retain his great estates in England and in Scotland, but, as far as he was able, increase his connexions in both countries. A single act of disobedience, an assertion of independence, or a premature disclosure of his ambitious designs, might be followed with a confiscation of his whole feudal estates; and Edward, whose ability was remarkably displayed in penetrating the secret motives of those by whom he was surrounded, would have little scruple, he knew, in reducing him at once to a condition, in which all that would be left to him would be the dreams of his ambition.

But other difficulties of an equally formidable nature stood in his way. Upon the failure of Baliol and his only son Edward, the ancient and powerful family of the Comyns were ready to dispute with him his title to the crown. Marjory Baliol, the sister of the King of Scotland, had married John de Comyn, Lord of Badenoch. Their son John, commonly called the Red Comyn, who had been the violent opponent of Wallace, possessed, in the event of the monarch dying without issue, the same right to the throne which was vested in Baliol himself. Comyn had also connected himself by marriage with the royal

family of England, and was, perhaps, at this moment, the most powerful subject in Scotland. To league themselves with Edward, therefore, and in this way to destroy the power of the Comyns, by the overwhelming strength of England, was a natural line of policy in the Bruces; and we find them invariably adopting it. With this key to their motives, let us examine for a moment the conduct of the family.*

When Baliol, driven to despair by the tyranny and injustice with which he was treated by the English king, determined to throw off the yoke, and, assisted by the Comyns, to assert his independence, Bruce the elder, not only accompanied Edward in his expedition against Scotland, but had procured from that monarch a promise of the crown. To see the destruction of his rivals, the Baliol party and the Comyns, and to ascend the vacant throne, was too great a temptation to be resisted by the father, or by his son the earl; and, in consequence of this expectation, the Bruces and their party, which then included some of the most powerful nobles in Scotland, either actually lent their assistance to Edward, or observed a dangerous and equally fatal neutrality. Edward, however, upon being reminded of his promise, after the successful termination of the campaign,

* From there being three Bruces, the grandfather, father, and son, alive at the same time, and engaged in public affairs, some obscurity is apt to occur. The grandfather, we shall call the competitor; his son, the father of the king, we name Bruce the elder; and the king himself, previous to his coronation, we distinguish either simply as Bruce, or by his title, the Earl of Carrick.

indignantly replied, that he had not come into Scotland to conquer a kingdom for Bruce; and this potent baron, disappointed of the full success of his designs, had at least the satisfaction of seeing his rival, Baliol, dethroned, and the preponderating influence of the Comyns effectually diminished.

In 1296, when Edward held his Parliament at Berwick for the settlement of Scotland, and the Scottish barons were compelled to take the oath of homage to the conqueror, the Earl of Carrick, then a young man of two-and-twenty, concurred in this national submission; but in the succeeding year, when Wallace commenced that splendid, though brief career, which terminated in his restoring freedom to Scotland, Bruce became publicly suspected of a design upon the crown. A contemporary English historian, who, from the circumstance of his being a monk of Giseburn, a religious house which possessed large estates in Annandale, appears to have received very minute and valuable information upon Scottish affairs at this period, gives an interesting account of his proceedings. "While these things," says he, "were carried on," (he means the rapid success of Wallace and his partisans,) "the Bishop of Carlisle and the other English barons, who commanded the castle and district around it, became considerably alarmed on bethinking themselves of the capricious and inconstant character of Robert Bruce the younger, who was Earl of Carrick. They accordingly transmitted a messenger to him, with a request, that if he meant to continue faithful to their master, he would repair to Carlisle on a certain day, and advise with

them upon the affairs of the kingdom. These commands the earl did not dare to disobey; and at the time appointed, having assembled his vassals of Carrick, he came to Carlisle, and there took a solemn oath upon the holy elements of the Supper, and the sword of Thomas a Becket, that he would assist our sovereign lord against the Scots and all his enemies, with his best power and advice; after which he returned into Annandale, and, to show the sincerity of his zeal, made an inroad with his armed vassals upon the lands of William Lord Douglas, who was then with Wallace, and, after wasting them with fire and sword, carried away his wife and children with him into Carrick. Yet, such was the inconstancy of this violent and ambitious youth, that, not long after, he joined the conspiracy of the Scottish leaders who had united themselves to Wallace; and, on his return to his own country, he summoned the Annandale men, who were the vassals of his father, then in the service of Edward, and made them this singular speech:—'My dear friends, you have already heard, without doubt, of that solemn oath which I lately took at Carlisle, and I cannot deny the fact; but the oath was a foolish one, and extorted by fear: it was my body that took the oath, and not my mind; but its having been taken at all is now to me the cause of much remorse and sorrow; yet I hope, ere long, to be absolved from it by our Holy Father. In the meantime, I am resolved to go and join my fellow countrymen, and assist them in their efforts to restore to its liberty the land of my nativity, for none, as you know, is an enemy of his own flesh,

and, as for me, I love my people. Let me beseech you, then, to adopt the same resolution, and to accompany me, and you shall ever be esteemed my most dear friends and approved counsellors.' The men of Annandale," continues the historian, " having deferred giving any positive answer to this request till the morrow, took the opportunity of retiring that same night under cover of the darkness, preferring to suffer any loss, however grievous, to the infamy of violating their oaths of homage, which they had sworn to the king; whilst the younger Bruce, aspiring, as was publicly reported, to the throne, joined the rebels with his own vassals of Carrick, and entered into a strict alliance with the Bishop of Glasgow and the Steward of Scotland, who were the principal leaders of the insurrection."*

On uniting himself, however, to these associates, Bruce soon found, to his mortification, that he had disclosed his ambitious designs somewhat prematurely, and, without gaining the support of the friends of liberty, had incurred the risk of losing the favour of Edward. Wallace, who was the soul of the councils of this party, had ever been a steady supporter of the right of Baliol as his lawful sovereign; his enemies, the Comyns, were in prison in England, and even the abilities of Wishart, the Bishop of Glasgow, a warm friend of Bruce, were unequal to the task of uniting in his favour the jarring elements of which the party was composed. Aware, therefore, that the moment had not yet arrived in

* Hemingford, vol. i. pp. 119, 120.

which there was any chance of success in the great object of his ambition, the Earl of Carrick once more made his peace with Edward, and consented to deliver his daughter, Marjory, as a hostage, for his continuance in loyalty.* From this period, he does not appear to have given the slightest assistance or countenance to Wallace in the noble struggle in which he engaged for the restoration of the liberty of the country; and the reasons for this conduct are not difficult to be discovered. Sir Andrew Moray, the great assistant and supporter of Wallace, was, by his mother, a near connexion of the Comyns; and his object, as well as that of Wallace, was the restoration of Baliol to the throne. Bruce, therefore, who had already found that they looked coldly on his schemes of individual ambition, in uniting himself to their future counsels, would not only have incurred the resentment of Edward, but would have been giving his assistance to the support of a party which stood directly between him and his way to the throne; and although a higher tone of patriotic feeling might have led its possessor to adopt a less selfish line of conduct, still, when we recollect the immense stake which the Earl of Carrick had to lose, and the dereliction of his royal claims, which such a mode of proceeding involved, it would be almost unreasonable to expect him to have acted otherwise. His conduct was certainly not heroic; yet it was such as an ambitious man, determined to possess himself of the throne to which he considered himself as born,

* Fœdera, vol. ii. p. 774.

but acting under the guidance of wisdom and prudence, must necessarily have adopted.

In the fatal campaign of 1298, which concluded with the battle of Falkirk, Bruce the elder, who, since the resignation of the earldom of Carrick in favour of his son, had continued to reside in England, and to serve Edward in his wars, appears to have accompanied the English monarch, whilst his son, the future king, shut himself up in the castle of Ayr, and maintained a cautious neutrality. The explanation of this conduct is still to be found in the circumstance of his great rivals the Comyns being at that time in arms against England. It was possible that their party might be triumphant; he therefore did not peril his estates or his feudal power, by appearing in arms against them: but it was possible also that Edward might be victorious; and, when his rivals were removed, he trusted that the fidelity of his father would induce the king to forgive his lukewarmness in the cause. Edward, however, did not approve of such cold and equivocal support; and having marched through the forest of Selkirk, he was about to attack the castle of Ayr, when Bruce, dreading the consequences, razed it to the ground, and retired into the recesses of Carrick. In the year 1299, when Wallace had resigned the regency, John Comyn of Badenoch, and Sir John de Soulis, were chosen governors of the kingdom; but as it was soon found that the party of Bruce was of such great strength, as to defeat the public measures for the safety of the kingdom, an attempt at union and conciliation took place. The Earl of Carrick, although then only

a young man in his twenty-fifth year, and Lamberton, Bishop of Glasgow, were elected joint regents with Comyn, in the name of Baliol. This attempt to reconcile the discordant elements of the two parties, was, in all probability, suggested by Lamberton himself; but the coalition was unnatural, and soon fell to pieces. Previous to the battle of Roslin, which was fought in the year 1302, Bruce had made his peace with Edward; and, in the three successive and obstinate campaigns which took place previous to the final subjugation of Scotland and the submission of the Comyns in 1303, he continued faithful to the English party, and rose rapidly in the confidence of Edward.

Bruce's motives at this period are very apparent. Baliol was in exile; and the restoration of this prince, or of his only son Edward, to the Scottish throne, was an event to which he knew Edward would never give his consent. The Comyns, on the other hand, against whom the brief coalition of 1299 seems rather to have confirmed than diminished the hostile disposition of Bruce, had now embarked so decidedly and inveterately in their opposition to Edward, that all idea of the English monarch raising to the Scottish throne one of this family must have appeared utterly improbable; and Bruce therefore found himself left the only claimant of the crown, to which he so ardently and constantly aspired. Under such a combination of circumstances, to gain the favour of Edward, to employ the English power to place him upon his paternal throne, and then to vindicate the independence of his kingdom, and throw off the yoke of England, was the line of policy which he adopted. And one part of his design

was crowned with complete success. As the faction of the Comyns gradually sunk under the deep and irrecoverable displeasure of the English king, Bruce not only retained, but increased his power; and, upon the conclusion of the war in 1304, although he was scarcely thirty years of age, was undoubtedly regarded as the most powerful and influential man in Scotland. But, on the other hand, he found that, as far as the ultimate object of his ambition was concerned, the possessing himself of the crown, he had been outwitted by the superior political ability of Edward, and had fallen into the same error as his father, the elder Bruce, in 1296. The English monarch at that period had secured to himself the assistance or the neutrality of the vassals of the father by a promise of the throne; and there can be little doubt that he held out the same prospect to the son in 1303. On both these occasions, however, Edward was completely insincere. His single object was to make himself master of Scotland, to govern it in his own person, and unite it for ever to his English dominions; and accordingly, when the submission of the Comyns in 1304 had for a short time abandoned Scotland to its fate, and the English monarch proceeded to the settlement of his new dominions, the Earl of Carrick discovered that, instead of a throne, his highest reward was to be employed as a commissioner along with the Bishop of Glasgow and Sir John de Moubray, in organizing a system of government for that kingdom which he had hoped to make his own.*

* Palgrave's Parliamentary Writs, Chron. Abst. p. 66.

It is here that Bruce's early career, during which he attempted indirectly to possess himself of the crown through the instrumentality of Edward, may be said to end; and if assuredly not of the highest tone in point of patriotic principle, his conduct had been neither inconsistent nor capricious. At this important crisis, although still apparently distant from the attainment of his great object, his situation offered a striking contrast to the condition of far older politicians. Whilst Baliol was an exile, and Comyn, subjected to a heavy fine, remained under the suspicion and displeasure of the conqueror, Bruce had risen into favour and confidence. Amid the general forfeitures and confiscations of property, he retained his large estates in Carrick and Annandale, which extended from the Frith of Clyde to the Solway. On the death of his father in 1304, he succeeded to the rich inheritance which this baron possessed in England,* and on the establishment of a new system of government in 1305, although disappointed of the reward to which he had looked forward, he was treated by Edward with much confidence and distinction, and brought prominently forward as a principal adviser in the formation of a constitution for his recent conquest.

But this, although to many minds it would have appeared ample success, was far from furnishing complete contentment to a disposition of his vaulting ambition, which had been nursed up with the proud feeling that he had a hereditary right to the crown, and felt within him a

* Hemingford, vol. i. p. 214.

capacity to achieve it at any peril. He had expected to become a king; and disappointed in this great object of his ambition, he once more engaged in a design to overturn the government of Edward in Scotland, and to restore liberty and independence to the country. The history of this new conspiracy, upon which we now enter, is deeply interesting.

Even when deprived of the favour of Edward, the Red Comyn and his adherents were still perhaps the most powerful party in Scotland; and Bruce, although occasionally compelled to follow the conqueror to London, and rigorously watched by Edward, found means to reconcile himself with Comyn, and to breathe into his willing ears his resentment at the unmerited fate of Scotland. Indeed the condition of the country, under the new settlement, as it is described by an authentic and contemporary historian, was well fitted to rouse the animosity of an ancient people hitherto accustomed to freedom and independence. " When Edward," says he, " that mighty king, had put down Baliol, he made haste to occupy the whole of the country; and this so effectually, that from Wick in Orkney, to Buller's Snook in Galloway, there was not a town or castle which he did not seize and garrison with Englishmen. His sheriffs, bailies, and other officers, were all English; and these within a short time waxed so covetous, haughty, and despiteful, that it was impossible for the Scots to live upon any terms with them. Their wives and daughters were treated with dishonour; and, if this was resented by any one, he was not only sure to

suffer at the moment, but some occasion was readily found to work his ruin. Had any Scotsman the good fortune to be possessed of aught that he valued, it did not matter what, a fair horse, a fleet hound, a well-trained hawk, it was soon seized, and forcibly appropriated; and if opposition was made, it was repaired by loss of life, or of land, or by imprisonment. Alas the day! how many brave knights did they hang and slay for little or none occasion, tyrannizing over the rich as well as the poor, following no rule but their own perverse pleasure, and taking no heed to right or justice! Ah, freedom is a noble thing, it is it alone which gives a relish and a solace to our life. If freedom fail, there is an end to both ease and pleasure in every generous heart. Little do they know, who have never submitted to a conqueror, the utter wretchedness that is coupled with thraldom; but had they essayed it soon would they be taught to prize their liberty above all riches in the world—soon would they confess that he only that lives freely can be said to live at all!"*

In this fine passage, the description given of the condition of the country, under the dominion of the English, is corroborated by authentic documents, as well as by their own historians; and the consequences produced in the mind of the people were such as may be easily imagined by all who have had the privilege of living under a free government. A fond recollection of their former independence, a disposition to rise upon

* Barbour's Bruce, pp. 9, 10.

every occasion against those who had intruded into their country, and that calm and even cautious determination to retain the memory of every wrong and injury which had been inflicted, and to requite it by a deep and terrible revenge, when the moment of triumph and retaliation arrived, were the principles engendered in the hearts of the Scottish people by the infliction upon them of a foreign governor and a foreign constitution; and Bruce, when he resolved in 1304 to organize that conspiracy against the English monarch, to which we have just alluded, reckoned upon these feelings, with which he was well acquainted, as one great ground upon which he looked forward to final success in the attempt. He accordingly began to enter into associations with those of his friends whom he could trust, and whose feudal power and command over their vassals were of consequence in seconding his attempt to throw off the yoke of England. It was the custom in that age for the higher nobles, when any great project was on foot, in which they required mutual combination and assistance, to form what were termed "bands," or associations, in which, by a written letter or charter, they bound themselves in the most solemn manner to support each other. Bruce accordingly engaged in a secret covenant of this kind with a prelate of great influence and ability, William de Lamberton, Bishop of St Andrews. Lamberton was the Primate of Scotland; as such, his influence over the body of the Scottish clergy was of course predominant; and this friendship afterwards stood Bruce in good part, under circum-

stances which, without it, were likely to have proved fatal. Besides the Bishop of St Andrews, he attached to his party the Earl of Strathern, the Bishop of Moray, and probably many others, whose names, in the destruction of authentic and contemporary muniments, have unfortunately been lost to history.* Having laid the foundation of this conspiracy for overturning the power of Edward, and ascertained that, in the spirit of the people, and with the assistance of the barons and prelates, who were ready to rise against England, there was good ground to anticipate success, Bruce took a more decided and dangerous step, and revealed his designs to Comyn. It is evident from this, that it was found impossible, without the concurrence of this powerful baron, to succeed against England; and indeed it seems probable that, although unanimous in their desire to rid themselves of the foreign yoke which had been imposed upon them, the people of Scotland were at this moment more disposed to favour the claim of Comyn than of Bruce to the throne, which the captivity and renunciation of Baliol had vacated. Bruce, therefore, having taken an opportunity when the business of the kingdom had brought them together at Stirling, is said to have thus addressed Comyn :—"You cannot fail to lament with me the misery to which this unhappy kingdom is reduced under the government of strangers. Why should we not yet unite in one determined effort to regain our freedom?

* Ayloffe's Calendars of Ancient Charters in the Tower, pp. 295, 296.

The right to the throne is divided between you and me, not equally indeed, for I have ever maintained that I have the nearest claim; but I am ready for the good of the country to waive this question. Give me your land, and I shall bind myself to support your title to the kingdom, and when we have expelled our enemies, to place the crown upon your head; or, if thou dost not choose to assume the state of the kingdom, here am I ready to resign to you my estates, on condition that you second me in my efforts to regain the throne of my fathers."* To this last alternative, that Bruce should resign his baronial power, and receive in return the assistance of his rival to overturn the government of Edward, and seize the Scottish crown, Comyn cheerfully consented; and a formal bond, similar to that which had been entered into by the Bishop of St Andrews and the Earl of Strathern, was drawn up between the two parties, of which written covenant Bruce retained a copy for himself, whilst he gave one to Comyn.

The Earl of Carrick, whom the jealousy of Edward did not suffer to be long absent from his court, then returned to England; and the further management of the conspiracy, which was still far from being ripely and carefully advised on, was intrusted in the meantime to Comyn and the Bishop of St Andrews. Bruce, however, although

* That this proposal was made, we have the concurrent testimony of the contemporary historians of both countries; and the slight varieties in their narrative only confirm its authenticity. Fordun a Goodal, vol. ii. p. 227. Scala Chronicle, in Leland's Collect. vol. i. p. ii, p. 542.

the school in which he had been brought up must have given him a considerable discernment in human character, was not aware of the true disposition of Comyn. Under an exterior of the most finished dissimulation, and manners which had borrowed, in a constant intercourse with the courts of England and of France, the highest elegance and refinement, this potent baron concealed some of the worst and darkest features of the feudal character—unforgivingness and revenge. He hated Bruce for the success with which he had contrived to retain the confidence of the English king, and to preserve his foreign and Scottish estates, whilst he himself, in return for his devotedness to the cause of liberty, had been rewarded with the loss of the royal favour, and a heavy fine; and he resolved to employ the secret information which he now possessed to ruin his rival, and reinstate himself once more in the friendship of Edward. He accordingly transmitted private information of the conspiracy to that monarch; and whilst Bruce was still at the English court, he dispatched a messenger with the letters and the agreement, which contained decisive evidence of his guilt. Edward, in deep indignation and alarm, had yet seen so much of the treachery and falsehood of the Scottish nobles, that, till the charge was thoroughly investigated, he seems to have been unwilling to give full credit to the information of Comyn. The letters might be forged; and it was right that Bruce should be heard in his defence; if he was guilty, it would be expedient that his brother Edward, a man of great ambition and ability, who then held the

castle of Lochmaben, and his younger brothers and partisans, who formed a powerful party, should be seized along with him; and time was required to bring them up, on some specious pretence, to England. In the meantime, he convoked a Parliament, to which he summoned the Earl of Carrick along with the rest of his barons; and Bruce, ignorant of the treachery of Comyn, attended without scruple. After some common business had been gone through, the king suddenly turned to Bruce, and giving him the letter or indenture, asked him if he knew his seal, and was aware of the contents.* In this mode of proceeding, it was evidently the intention of Edward to trust to his own discernment in discovering, by the impression made upon him at the time, whether the Earl of Carrick was guilty or not; and it must be allowed that the crisis was one of fearful interest and danger: but Bruce was saved by his own address and presence of mind. With a well-dissembled astonishment, but evincing no symptoms of confusion or of fear, he calmly replied that the deed was a forgery, that the seal, although well imitated, was not his; and that, if Edward would allow him a short interval to send for his real seal, which was not then in his possession, he would pledge his whole estates to prove to his satisfaction the truth of what he now alleged. This was said with so much of the appearance of injured integrity, that the King of England was for a moment deceived, and the Earl of Carrick had permission to leave the Parliament, and to

* Barbour, p. 21.

send for the documents on which he founded his defence. That very night, however, he received private intelligence from the Earl of Gloucester, his near kinsman, of a design to seize his person,* and, taking horse, accompanied by a single attendant, he escaped with all speed into Scotland. Although discovered and compelled to fly, he was still ignorant of the person who had betrayed him; but a singular circumstance brought this to light. On the borders of the kingdom, he and his companion suddenly encountered a messenger who travelled alone, and seemed desirous of avoiding them. He was recognised as a servant of Comyn; and, a sudden suspicion darting into his mind, Bruce seized him, and searching his person, found new letters of Comyn to the king, enclosing farther details of the conspiracy, and recommending the instant seizure of the Earl of Carrick. To slay the unhappy envoy, and to possess themselves of his dispatches, was the work of a moment; and as all was now disclosed, Bruce, full of indignation at the treachery of Comyn, pressed on till he reached the castle of Lochmaben, then in the possession of his brother Edward, where he held a council with his friends as to the most prudent mode of procedure. The conspiracy had been prematurely revealed; although it included some of the most powerful men in Scotland, its details had not been brought into completion; it was yet undiscovered how far the treachery of Comyn had extended; and, till this was fully ascertained, all idea of rising against

* Wynton's Chronicle, vol. ii. pp. 124, 125.

the government of Edward would be vain and dangerous. One thing, however, was fortunate. The presence of Bruce at this moment in Scotland occasioned no surprise, as the court of the English Justiciar was about to be held at Dumfries, where, as proprietors of large estates in Annandale and Galloway, both Bruce and Comyn were bound to give attendance. The Earl of Carrick, therefore, was aware that he would meet Comyn at Dumfries; and he knew, at the same time, that this baron could as yet have no suspicions that his treachery had been discovered. In such circumstances, it was deemed the safest plan for Bruce to request an interview with Comyn, and to endeavour to discover whether the breach of faith was confined to himself, or extended throughout other branches of the conspiracy.

This famous and fatal meeting took place on the 4th of February 1305, in the church of the Grey Friars at Dumfries.* Bruce was accompanied by a few attendants, amongst whom were his brother-in-law, Sir Christopher Seton, Sir James Lindesay, and Gilpatrick of Kirkpatrick. Along with the Lord of Badenoch came only his brother, Sir Robert Comyn; and, on the first salutation, every thing seemed friendly and amicable. Bruce and his treacherous rival embraced in the manner of the times; they even kissed each other;† and, whilst their friends retired to some distance,

* Hemingford, vol. i. p. 219.

† Ibid. vol. i. p. 219. "Mutuo se receperunt in osculum, sed non pacis."

the two barons walked up towards the high altar, engaged in earnest discourse. As they advanced, however, words grew high and keen, and the Earl of Carrick, forgetting for a moment his prudence, accused his associate of having betrayed their confidence to Edward. "It is a falsehood you utter," said Comyn; and Bruce, without adding another word, instantly stabbed him with his dagger; whilst his victim sunk down bleeding upon the steps of the altar. All this passed in an instant; and, alarmed at the atrocity of the deed, he rushed up to his friends, who stood without the church. On observing his confusion, they hurriedly interrogated him as to what had happened. "I doubt," said Bruce, "I have slain Comyn."—"And is that a thing to be left to a doubt?" cried Kirkpatrick; "I shall make surer work;" upon which, along with Seton and Lindesay, he ran back into the church, and, finding the unhappy man still breathing, and in the hands of the monks, who had removed him behind the screen of the altar, they barbarously dispatched him with repeated wounds, slaying at the same time Sir Robert Comyn, who vainly attempted to defend his brother.†

Nothing could be more atrocious, and assuredly nothing more ill advised, as far as human prudence could foresee, than this murder; and under the circumstances in which it was committed, it is evident that it must have been as unpremeditated as it was cruel and unjustifiable. This

* Hemingford, vol. i. p. 219. Scala Chronicle, in Leland's Collect vol. i. p. ii. p. 542.

indeed is the only circumstance which can afford the least excuse for Bruce; and if we make allowance for the fierce manners of the times, it must be admitted, that, smarting under a recent sense of injury, to receive the lie from the traitor who had betrayed him, was matter of deep provocation. On the return of cool reflection, he was not slow to perceive the extreme and almost desperate circumstances into which his ungovernable fury had thrown him. He had no intention of murdering Comyn, but he had struck the first, if not the mortal blow; he had violated a place of tremendous sanctity, by staining the high altar with blood, and the murder had been consummated by his followers, acting, as it must have appeared, with his consent, and completed almost under his eye. Edward was already aware of the conspiracy; his flight had furnished conclusive proof of the truth of Comyn's representations, and if he had little hopes of forgiveness then, it would be madness to expect it now, when to the crime of treason he had added the deeper guilt of murder. On the side of England, therefore, he was surrounded by danger, and if he looked to Scotland, appearances were there almost as hopeless and gloomy. Before this dreadful event, he had the fair prospect of conciliating by his power, his talents, and his persuasive address, the jarring interests of all parties in the state, and uniting them in a firm opposition to England. He was then supported by the great body of the nobility. Now, by one rash and bloody deed, all this was turned to his disadvantage;—he had marshalled in that deep and fatal opposition to

him, which was embittered by the feudal feeling or rather duty of revenge, all the relatives of Comyn to the most distant degree, and this, from the influence and connexions of the family embraced a large proportion of the most powerful families in Scotland. Before, he had been animated by the good wishes of the people; now, he felt that he must be to them rather an object of dread and horror: before, he could reckon with confidence on the influence of the clergy; now, he had armed against himself all the terrors of religion, all the darkest prejudices of superstition. If to this we add the compunction which a generous mind must have felt, upon being hurried, in a moment of passionate feeling, into a crime of so dark a description, it will be difficult to conceive a situation more calculated to produce despondency, than that in which Bruce now found himself.

It was fortunate, perhaps, that it gave no time to brood over what had happened, but required immediate action to secure his personal safety. On coming to the door of the monastery, Bruce threw himself on Comyn's horse, with which a page waited his master, and collecting his small band of friends around him, suddenly rode to the castle, where the English judges were then sitting, and seizing the gates, summoned all the Scots to their assistance. They then sent word to the judges to deliver themselves without delay, but found the gates of the court barricaded, Fire was instantly brought to burn them out, and, afraid of being destroyed, they surrendered their persons, and were permitted to fly to Eng-

land.* The alarm was now widely spread: the English, dreading the breaking out of some great revolution, fled in all directions; and Bruce, with his friends, rode from Dumfries to Lochmaben, his family inheritance, where the castle, a pile of great strength and extent, was in the hands of his brother Edward. He there held a consultation regarding what was best to be done in the present crisis, which concluded in a resolution, that he must instantly assert his right to the crown. After the murder of Comyn, indeed, it required little penetration to discover that his only chance of safety and success lay in that bold step. He accordingly assembled around him his own vassals of Carrick and Annandale; he dispatched messengers on all sides with letters to his friends, requesting their speedy arrival with their whole available force; he wrote to his faithful ally, Lamberton, Bishop of St Andrews, lamenting his own rash deed, and expressing his deep penitence, but imploring his countenance and assistance, now that the conspiracy had been prematurely discovered; and he resolved, as soon as it was possible to assemble a sufficient force, to march to Perth, and hold the ceremony of his coronation at Scone.*

On learning the fate of Comyn, the Bishop of St Andrews is said to have made an extraordinary reflection. " I trust," said he, " that true Thomas's prophecy is now near its fulfilment. May Heaven help me, but I think Bruce will yet be king, and have the governance of this land!" The reader is already aware, that Thomas of

* Hemingford, vol. i. p. 220.

Ercildoune, or Thomas the Rhymer, was a famous seer of the time of Alexander III.; and not only the people, but the higher classes in Scotland, appear to have treasured up some prophetic enunciation regarding their deliverance from England, which they fondly imagined was on the eve of its accomplishment in the person of Bruce. It need scarcely be observed of how much use a persuasion of this kind was likely to prove to the ultimate success of his cause, in throwing around him a sort of mysterious and heroic fatality. Nor was the anticipation disappointed—for, whilst Bruce himself and his friends repented deeply of the deed which he had committed, as likely to work his ruin, and the people talked idly of the dreams of a madman or an impostor, that all-wise and holy God, who, in the exercise of his infinite goodness and power, hath so often "made the wrath of man to praise him," had decreed that out of this dark deed of blood and revenge, there should arise the liberty and happiness of a whole nation.

The murder of Comyn was perpetrated on the 4th of February, 1305, and Bruce did not repair to Scone for his coronation, till the 27th of March, 1306.* The interval, of nearly two months, was employed in active preparations for the great struggle which awaited him; in securing as many castles and fortalices throughout Scotland as was possible; in dispatching his warlike brothers in various directions to commu-

* The reader need hardly be reminded, that the year began with March.

nicate with his friends and adherents ; in collecting the whole money, arms, and provisions, which he could command; in sounding the intentions of the wary; in confirming the wavering; in consulting with his tried and steady counsellors; in attempting to draw from their lurking places those followers of Wallace, who, after the death of their great leader, had fled to the remoter fastnesses, or to the Highland solitudes, of the country, and there darkly brooded over the loss of their liberty. The small band of brave men who now joined Bruce, with the exception of his ecclesiastical friends and immediate kinsmen, was composed either of the barons who had fought under Wallace, or of their sons and successors. Besides the Bishops of St Andrews and of Moray, he numbered amongst his adherents Wishart, Bishop of Glasgow, the Earls of Lennox, Athole, and Mar; his four brothers, Edward, Nigel, Thomas, and Alexander; his nephew, Thomas Randolph of Strathdon; his brother-in-law, Christopher Seton, ancestor of the Duke of Gordon, and the ancient and noble house of the Earls of Wynton; Gilbert de la Haye of Errol, with his brother, Hugh de la Haye; Alexander Fraser, brother of Simon Fraser of Oliver Castle; Walter de Somerville of Linton and Carnwath; David of Inchmartin, Robert Boyd, and Robert Fleming. These, if we except the clerical abettors of the cause, did not exceed the number of sixteen; and with this handful of barons, he determined to brave the resentment, and defy the power, of the ablest prince, and perhaps the most accomplished military leader, in Christendom. Bruce, on the other

hand, was yet young in the art of war; although he had reached the age of thirty, he had seen little service at home, and none abroad. Unlike his father, he had remained in his own country, instead of engaging in the perils of the crusades. He had been educated, indeed, at the court of Edward I., in all the accomplishments of chivalry; and possessing a noble and powerful figure, and that quickness of eye, and aptitude for the acquisition of athletic exercises, which is natural to some physical constitutions, he soon acquired an unusual skill and excellence in the use of his weapons, and was allowed, even by his enemies, to be one of the best knights of his time. But this, although it fitted him to shine in the tourney, or ensured him success in an individual encounter, was of little avail where armies had to be led, castles besieged, marches conducted through a country full of his enemies, and battles fought with an inferior force against superior numbers, led by veteran and experienced commanders. All this, which constituted the higher department of the art of war, he had yet to learn, and the consequence was seen in the fatal reverses and defeats which attended the early part of his military career. But Bruce, with all this inexperience, possessed that rare element of genius which was calculated to conduct him to excellence in almost any subject to which he applied the strength of his faculties; guided by a calm unclouded judgment, and a spirit not to be depressed by calamity, he gradually extracted experience and knowledge from defeats which would have overwhelmed an ordinary mind; and out of these bitter and painful

elements, he at length formed for himself a system of military tactics admirably adapted to the nature of the country he defended, and which he lived to see crowned with complete success.

Having assembled these friends, which, though few, included some men of high ability, he rode with them from Lochmaben to Glasgow, and from this city proceeded to Scone, in which ancient monastery he had determined to hold the ceremony of his coronation. On his road between Glasgow and Perth, an incident occurred, which is deeply interesting, as commencing a connexion between Bruce and one of the bravest and most faithful of his followers.

William, Lord of Douglas, the companion of Wallace, had died in an English prison; his great estates had been seized by the conqueror, and given to Lord Clifford, whilst his son, James, a boy who inherited the heroic qualities of the father, escaped for a few years to France, and afterwards returned to Scotland, a young man of eighteen, where he lived for some time in concealment, under the protection of Lamberton, Bishop of St Andrews. On hearing of the death of Comyn, the youthful Douglas, who saw his broad fields in the hands of strangers, felt his spirit stirring within him, and seeking his patron, the bishop, informed him of his resolution to join with Bruce. The interview, as it took place between the reverend prelate and the youthful squire, is beautifully described by Barbour, and bears upon it the strong impression of truth. "Father," said he, addressing himself to Lamberton, "thou hast seen how these

English have spoiled me of my paternal property. Thou hast heard, too, how the Earl of Carrick has openly asserted his claim to the crown, whilst these strangers are leagued against him, and have determined to avenge the slaughter of Comyn, and disinherit him as they have done me. Therefore, since these things are so, I have resolved, with your good leave, to join my fortunes to Bruce, and share with him both weal and woe; nor do I despair, through his help, to gain my lands, in spite of Clifford and all his kin."—"Grateful should I be to God, my sweet son, that thou wert there!" replied Lamberton; "yet, were I now openly to give thee the means of joining him, it would work my ruin. Go, then, secretly, and take from my stable my own horse. Should the groom make any resistance, spare not a blow to quell it. This will exculpate me, and thou mayest then obey thy will."* Douglas accordingly seized the horse, striking the groom, who attempted to stay him, with his dagger, and, mounting in haste, rode towards the spot where he conjectured he should meet Bruce. Nor was he long kept in suspense, for the royal cavalcade of knights and attendants soon approached; and the young baron, accosting Bruce with much modesty and affection, threw himself from his horse, and kneeling, as he held his bridle rein, proffered him his homage and his services. It may easily be imagined that this was an affecting meeting. Douglas's family and his misfortunes were familiar to all present; and the Earl of Carrick, raising him up, and fondly

* Barbour, pp. 26, 27.

embracing him, received him into his service, and, turning to the lords, who crowded round, expressed his confidence that he would bear himself worthy of his brave lineage. Nor was this anticipation disappointed; for this youth became afterwards that celebrated person, known in Scottish history by the name of the Good Sir James Douglas, whose successes in war almost rivalled the fame of his master, yet who lived with him in habits of the most familiar friendship, unclouded throughout a long life by a single hour of distrust or jealousy, and undissolved even by death; for it was this same knight who, many years after, was selected by the king, when he lay upon his deathbed, to fulfil his last wishes, and carry his heart to Jerusalem.

Bruce and his attendants now resumed their progress to Scone; and, on their arrival there, being joined by the Bishops of St Andrews, Glasgow, and Moray, he was crowned in that ancient monastery, on the 27th of March, 1306.* The ceremony could not be performed with that studied splendour and pomp of preparation which accompany the succession to a secure and pacific throne; but, on this account, it perhaps rather gained than lost in the deep interest which attended it. The regalia of Scotland, the sacred stone on which the kings were accustomed to take the oaths to the Celtic portion of their people, the regal mantle, and every thing connected with the state and dignity of the throne, had been carried off by Edward in 1296; the

* Fordun a Goodal, vol. ii. p. 230.

ready aid of his friends supplied the want. From his own wardrobe, the Bishop of Glasgow furnished the royal robes in which Bruce appeared; a banner, embroidered with the arms of Baliol, was brought from the treasury of the same prelate; a small circlet of gold, borrowed, in all probability, from the brows of some virgin saint or holy martyr, was placed, by the Bishop of St Andrews, upon his head;* and, as he sat in the state chair of the Abbot of Scone, the small band of prelates and barons took their oaths of homage amid the applauses of the inferior clergy belonging to the monastery, and of the people who had crowded from the neighbourhood to witness the solemnity. The inauguration in the stone chair was necessarily omitted, and no Highland sennachy, or bard, deduced, as at the coronation of Alexander, the descent of the monarch from the ancient Kings of Albyn; but almost immediately, the accession of Bruce acquired additional solemnity from an extraordinary circumstance. To the Earl of Fife, as the descendant of Macduff, belonged the right of placing the King of Scotland upon the throne. The then Earl of Fife, however, was of the English party; but his sister, Isabella, Countess of Buchan, entertained a romantic admiration of Bruce. Eloping from her husband, and carrying with her his war-horses and a train of attendants worthy of her rank, this bold and high-spirited woman suddenly appeared at Scone two days after the coronation, and demanded that the ceremony should be repeated, and her hereditary right of

* Fœdera Angliæ, vol. ii. p. 1048.

placing the king upon the throne of his ancestors admitted and enforced. Singular as was this request, Bruce did not conceive that he was in circumstances to think lightly of it; and, on the 29th of March, he was a second time placed, by Isabella, upon the regal chair, and crowned King of Scotland.* That an event of this kind should occasion some jealousy in the consort of the new monarch, and give rise to suspicions against the honour of the Countess of Buchan, was not unnatural; but the stories circulated by the English writers upon this subject appear to be ridiculously exaggerated.

When the news of this revolution in Scotland reached Edward, he had returned to Winchester, from a progress through the West of England, which he had undertaken chiefly for recreation and the benefit of his health; and he was preparing for the solemn observation of Easter. But the accounts banished all his dreams of devotion; and he is said to have received the intelligence with a burst of ungovernable fury, and the deepest resolutions of revenge. Nor was it wonderful that such should be his sentiments; for fifteen years, at an incredible expense of blood and of treasure, wrung from the necessities of his people, he had been employed in achieving the conquest of Scotland, and, in violation of every principle of justice, in attempting to impose the yoke of servitude upon an ancient and independent kingdom. It was but a few months before that he had finally triumphed over his

* Hemingford, vol. i. p. 220.

enemies. He had concluded his last campaign; he had presented the conquered territory with an English governor and a new constitution; and, under the idea that the long struggle was concluded, and that Scotland was for ever to remain an integral portion of his dominions, he had sought his capital to receive the congratulations of his people, and enjoy the repose which his age and increasing infirmities demanded. And now, before the fourth moon had filled her horns, the whole system was overturned, and the country once more in arms! He had the mortification, too, to see at the head of the revolution a man whom he had himself educated and highly favoured, and with whose remarkable character and abilities he could not fail to be intimately acquainted. Such is generally the fate of conquerors; but the solemn lesson, although often repeated, has failed, in every age of the world, to show the emptiness of glory, or to dispel the dreams of ambition. Upon the mind of Edward, which possessed a firmness that no reverses could shake, the impression made by the intelligence was that of the necessity of immediate exertion, and a resolution to inflict a memorable example of revenge. He accordingly determined, although so weak in his limbs that he could no longer mount on horseback, to proceed immediately in person against Scotland; and he resolved to give additional dignity to the expedition, by holding, in the midst of the army and the barons who were summoned on this occasion, a magnificent and solemn entertainment, in which his eldest son, the Prince of Wales, was to be made a knight. In the meantime,

he issued a hasty order, appointing Aymer de Valence, the Earl of Pembroke, Governor of Scotland, and directing the counties of York and Northumberland, with the whole of the English captains and officers throughout Scotland, to submit to his orders, and to assist him in the suppression of the rebellion. The expressions in this letter are interesting. It declares, "That Robert de Brus, late Earl of Carrick, in whom the king, till now, reposed the fullest confidence, had broken the oath of homage and fidelity which he swore to the King of England, and, leaguing himself with certain traitors and evil-disposed persons, his accomplices and friends, had wickedly slain John Comyn of Badenoch, the faithful subject of England, in the church of the Friars Minors at Dumfries; that, not content with this dark and unheard of wickedness, he had audaciously made war upon his kingdom, seized and imprisoned his sheriffs, violently occupied various towns and castles, and attempted to usurp the government of the land, to the scandal of the Catholic church, and the invasion of the rights of his crown." It then proceeds to the nomination of the Earl of Pembroke, and commands the barons, knights, and faithful subjects of Yorkshire and Northumberland to be in arms within eight days, attended by their feudal services, and ready to proceed against the enemy.* Not content with these warlike preparations, the monarch proceeded to direct against Bruce a spiritual anathema, which was, in that dark age, still more tremendous. He addressed a letter to

* Fœdera Angliæ, vol. ii. p. 988.

the Pope, informing him of the murder of Comyn, and the contempt and violation of the sanctuary; and Clement, without delay, fulminated a bull against the Scottish monarch, branding him with the guilt of murder and sacrilege, directing the Prelates of York and Carlisle to pronounce the sentence of excommunication, and placing the persons and the property of his friends and adherents under the weight of an interdict.

The ceremonies which preceded Edward's departure for Scotland, exhibited a singular and splendid combination of the solemnities of the Catholic faith, with the pomp of chivalry, and the ruder preparations for actual war. In the practice of feudal monarchies, the admission of the king's eldest son into the rank of knighthood was one of the three great occasions on which the sovereign found himself entitled, by the constitution of the kingdom, to call upon his barons for an unusual aid or subscription in money, and a more than ordinary display of magnificence in their own persons and retinue. On the same day in which young Edward assumed his gilded spurs, two hundred and ninety-seven youths, of the like age, and selected from the noblest families in England, crowded before the gates of the king's palace, to demand the same distinction. As the palace would not hold this brilliant assemblage, with their pages and attendants, Edward ordered the trees to be cut down in the orchard of the Temple; and on this spot the novices pitched their pavilions, and received from the wardrobe of the king the silk robes, rich doublets, and embroidered scarfs and belts, which were usually presented to

them upon such occasions. Apparelled in these, they watched their arms, and kept their vigils, in the church of the Temple, replete with so many noble associations, amid the tombs and recumbent figures of the brave knights who had fought in the Holy Land, and rescued the Sepulchre from the hands of the Infidels. At the same moment, the Prince of Wales watched his arms in the Abbey of Westminster; and on the morrow, after he had been knighted by the king his father, standing on the steps of the high altar, he conferred upon his three hundred companions the same distinction; after which the feast was spread in the Great Hall at Westminster, and, amid the unusual revelry, a singular ceremony took place. Upon a flourish of trumpets, the doors of the hall were thrown open, and the seneschal entered, marshalling two attendants, who carried up to the table, and placed before the king, two swans covered with golden network, and bearing themselves proudly, on an enormous plateau. Edward immediately rose, and with a loud voice, which was audible at the remotest corner, made a solemn vow to God and to the swans, that he would instantly set out for Scotland, and there take no rest till he had avenged on Bruce the death of John Comyn, and inflicted a terrible punishment on his abettors.* The same oath was then administered to the prince and his companions; and the king, calling his barons to witness, extorted a promise from his son, that if his father's death should place him on the throne before he had subdued his

* Triveti Annales, p. 343.

enemies, the body should be carried along with the army, and kept unburied till the campaign had concluded in victory. He then appointed the whole strength of his dominions to meet him at Carlisle by midsummer; and, in the meantime, dispatched Aymer de Valence, the Governor of Scotland, along with Henry Percy and Lord Clifford, at the head of a large force, into that country, whilst the Prince of Wales, with his new knights-companions, followed with the reserve.

Whilst these great preparations were proceeding in England, Bruce found himself surrounded with difficulties which would have overwhelmed a less determined spirit. The death of Comyn had raised against him the spirit of resistance, and the desire of revenge, in every friend and connexion of this potent family, to the remotest degree; and there was scarcely a single district in Scotland where these were not to be found. The Earls of March and of Angus, the families of Lorn, of Abernethy, and of Brechin, Lord Soulis, the Earl of Fife, and the powerful house of Macdowgall in Argyle, commanded, by their united influence, the greatest part of Galloway, the Merse, Angus, and the Western Highlands, and had already collected their vassals; whilst the greater part of the country was in the hands of the English, and the castles, strongly garrisoned, and well supplied with provisions, were capable of resisting a force far superior to any that Bruce could lead against them. On the other hand, the Earl of Pembroke and Henry Percy had now reached Perth with a considerable army, whilst the King of Scotland, with his small band of adherents, occupied the neigh-

bourhood of Scone, having returned to that part of the country from a progress which he had made through some districts which he expected would be favourable to his pretensions. The sister of the Earl of Pembroke was the widow of the Red Comyn; and it seems probable that this English baron had sent a personal defiance to Bruce. In reply to this, and obeying rather his own feelings as a knight than his duties as a king, Bruce challenged Pembroke to fight with him on the 18th of June; and, for this purpose, drew up his army in a field beside Perth. To this communication, the English earl returned for answer, that the day was too far spent, but that he would be ready to meet him on the morrow, upon the same ground. Trusting to this solemn engagement, which, according to the usages of chivalry, and the strict laws of the cartel, it was held dishonourable to infringe, Bruce retreated to the wood of Methven; here the third part of his troops having been dispatched to forage, the rest undid their armour, and throwing themselves carelessly on the green turf, began to prepare their supper, whilst their horses grazed in the forest, and their spears rested on the trees beside them. In the midst of this enjoyment and security, a cry was raised that the enemy were at hand; and Bruce hastily arming himself, and commanding his leaders to follow his example, had scarcely time to mount his horse, when he found himself furiously attacked by an English force which nearly tripled his own.* He made, however,

* We learn from Barbour, that, before the battle, the

a desperate resistance, and exposed his person with what was deemed imprudent hardihood. Indeed, the battle, from the condition of Bruce's army when surprised, and the nature of the ground where it was fought, was rather a succession of individual combats than a field fairly disputed in masses. Bruce was himself four times unhorsed, and as often rescued and remounted—thrice by Simon Fraser, and once by his brother-in-law, Christopher Seton.* At last so many of the Scots were slain and taken prisoners, that any further struggle must have been attended with inevitable ruin; and the king, with the small remnant of his force, amounting to about five hundred men, retreated into the strong and mountainous district of Athole.

Although nothing could be more brave than the behaviour of the king in this first encounter, the defeat was total, and some of his best adherents fell into the hands of the enemy. Sir Thomas Randolph, his nephew, then, in the descriptive phrase of Barbour, a "young bacheler," Sir David Berkely, Sir Alexander Fraser, the Barons of Inchmartin and Somerville, with Hugh de la Haye, were all taken. Of these, Bruce had soon the mortification to learn, that Randolph, with youthful versatility, despairing of the success of the cause, had joined the English.

force of Pembroke exceeded that of Bruce by fifteen hundred men; and that, when the King of Scotland was attacked in Methven wood, the third part of his army was absent on a foraging expedition. Barbour, pp. 30-32. l. 36, 101.

* Mathew West. p. 445. Barbour, p. 35. l. 219.

He had, however, the satisfaction to see some of his truest friends still left around him. The Earl of Athole, Sir James Douglas, his brother Edward Bruce, along with Gilbert de la Haye and Sir Niel Campbell, succeeded in keeping a small party together; and although deserted by many who quietly dropped away, when they saw their enemies encircling them on every side, still the courage of the rest was unsubdued. "These," says a delightful contemporary writer, "for many a day after this, led the life of outlaws, often exposed to all the extremities of want in the mountains, their only food being the venison which they occasionally caught in the chase, and their drink the water from the rock; nor did they dare to descend into the low country, for the body of the people, ever precarious in their attachment, were now against the king, and willing once more to place themselves under the English protection."* In this manner did Bruce conceal himself in the hills, till the greater part of his followers were dispersed or broken down by misery; and, at last, receiving intelligence, that his brother Nigel, with his queen, and accompanied by the wives and sisters of his few followers, had arrived at Aberdeen, with the determination to share their perils rather than take the chance of falling into the hands of the enemy, he ventured from his strongholds; and meeting them in that city, conducted them in safety into the heart of Breadalbane.

The condition of the king at this moment, and the life which he was compelled to lead, were

* Barbour, p 38, l. 300. Fordun a Goodal, vol. ii. p. 233.

precarious in the extreme, but included abundance of that keen excitement and adventure, which carry with them a certain charm even for the sufferers, and, by rousing the interest of the people, disposed them once more to favour his cause. The presence, too, of the women, who dwelt in the woods with their husbands, brothers, or fathers, gave a romance and a devotion to the cause; whilst the men were absent at the chase, or engaged in an expedition of plunder, the hands that had been little accustomed to such common labours, prepared the food, and washed the linen, and spread for carpets, in the caves where they had taken refuge, the skins of the animals caught in hunting; and filial love, or conjugal affection, whilst it soon led to skill in these menial services, softened for a while the bitterness of privation and disappointment. It was at this time that the success and ingenuity of the good Sir James Douglas, then a very youthful knight, deserved to be so simply and graphically described by the ancient biographer of Bruce. "At this season," says he, "they were greatly distressed for want of meat, and the worthy James of Douglas was ever busy and on the alert to procure provisions for the ladies; and many ways had he of getting it. Sometimes he would bring them venison; sometimes he cunningly wrought gins, with which he caught pikes, salmon, trouts, eels, and par. Sometimes he would go on a foraging party, and then every man tried to get the most he could; but none were of such assistance to the ladies as Sir James, although the king, by his cheerful and humorous stories, and

his constant activity, proved also a great comfort to them."*

Such was their mode of life as they harboured in Breadalbane, and slowly retreated till they reached the head of Loch Tay. Bruce now found himself in a country beset with danger, as the part of Argyleshire into which he had been compelled to retreat was under the sway of his mortal enemy, Alexander, chief of the Macdowgalls and Lord of Lorn, who had married the aunt of the murdered Comyn. This chief accordingly forthwith assembled his friends and dependents, and attacked the king at Dalry, beside the holy well of St Fillan, about a mile below the village of Tynedrum. The Argyle Highlanders were a thousand strong, and fought on foot, armed with swords, short daggers, and a murderous weapon borrowed from the Norwegians, consisting of a sharp heavy axe fixed to a long pole or handle, known afterwards by the name of the Lochaber axe. With these they inflicted deep and ghastly wounds upon the horses of the Scottish knights; and Bruce, who found the ground unfavourable for the operations of his diminished band of cavalry, and saw a fierce and desperate cloud of mountaineers gathering round him on every side, was again compelled to fly, that he might save himself from being utterly cut to pieces. The admirable skill and personal valour, however, with which he managed his retreat through a narrow valley, forming his diminished phalanx into a compact body, throwing himself

* Barbour, p. 40, l. 375.

into the rear, and repulsing the foremost of the pursuers, extorted the admiration of his enemies. Encompassed, indeed, as he was by numbers of these hardy and powerful antagonists, encumbered by the weight of his armour, and with scarcely a yard of level ground for his horse to wheel, it was almost impossible for the king to manage his cavalry, or to avoid being overwhelmed. His enemies, on the contrary, formed under every advantage. They had been trained from their infancy amid the precipices, and found a footing where no other living man could have stood; they swung themselves by the branches from tree to tree, and crag to crag, with the security and celerity of the wild-cat or the squirrel. They swarmed round the little steel phalanx, which slowly retreated through the pass, with the fierceness of mountain hornets, now in the front, now in the rear, now discharging from the rocks overhead immense masses of stone and flights of arrows; now gliding under the horses, and inflicting ghastly wounds with their axes or daggers; at other times, clinging to the reins, or grappling with the horsemen with a ferocity and unwillingness to quit their hold, which looked as if man, educated in these wildernesses, had borrowed the habits of the animals of prey by which they were infested. In these dreadful encounters, Sir James Douglas and Sir Gilbert de la Haye were cruelly wounded; and Bruce's great personal strength and skill in the use of his weapons, became remarkably conspicuous. At one moment he made a narrow escape. Three strong Highlanders, who are said to have been chamberlains to the Lord

of Lorn, threw themselves in his way, resolved to make a desperate effort to become masters of his person. One seized his bridle reins, and attacked him in front; another grasped his steel boot, thrusting his arm between the stirrup and the foot, attempting by main force to unhorse him. Bruce, with one blow, felled the foremost to the ground; and, as there was no space to wheel or disengage himself from his other enemy, he clapped his legs tightly to the flanks of his horse, and spurring him at the same moment that the hands of the Highlander were entangled in his stirrup, caused him to bolt forward, dragging the unhappy wretch off his feet. Before this rapid evolution was completed, his third assailant sprung up behind the king, and, grappling him round the middle, attempted to stab him with his dirk; Bruce, however, by an exertion of strength which seemed, to those who witnessed it, almost superhuman, shook the mountaineer from his hold, and, as he fell, cleft him with his battle-axe from the skull to the chin; he then dispatched his companion, whose arms he had kept pinioned to his horse, and, disengaging himself from the dead body, rejoined his men, sore fatigued with the encounter, but congratulating himself that he and his horse had escaped unwounded. This desperate contest took place in a narrow pass or ravine upon the banks of Loch Tay. It was seen by Lorn himself; and a baron of that country, named Macnaughtan, who stood beside his chief, broke out into expressions of admiration at the uncommon hardihood of Bruce. "It would seem," said Lorn, "that thou

art in love with this slayer of thy men."—"No, by Heaven!" answered Macnaughtan, "saving thy presence, it is not so; but I hold it my duty as a good knight to praise him, be he friend or foe, who wins the prize of chivalry; and never in my time have I seen in the field, or met with in story, a knight who hath done his devoir better than yonder king this day!"* In the mortal struggle, a golden buckle, or brooch, which fixed some part of Bruce's armour, was torn off, and picked up by some of the enemy; it fell afterwards into the hands of the chief, and is still preserved in his family.†

The king immediately made his retreat from the scene of this unfortunate defeat towards the Lennox, a district which, from the attachment of the Earl of Lennox to his person, would, he doubted not, be favourable to him. It was now the month of August; and as the winter approached, the miseries of cold and famine were coming nearer every day, and the thoughts of what they yet might be called upon to suffer, produced a great sinking of heart in his party. Their shoes were already worn off their feet, and their place had been supplied by sandals, rudely formed of the untanned skins of the deer or other animals, and even these, torn and decayed, hardly protected their feet. During the summer it had not been difficult to support themselves by fishing and the chase; but when the ground was covered

* Barbour, p. 46, l. 565.

† The representative of the ancient house of Macdowgall of Lorn wore his plaid fixed with this brooch at Holyrood, when King George IV. held his court there in 1822.

with snow, and the rivers and the mountain streams were chained by frost, to be supplied from these sources must become precarious, and almost impossible. Besides, Douglas, the brave and skilful knight, whose activity and ingenuity had hitherto never failed of success, now lay languishing under a deep and dangerous wound. And if such trials made a serious impression upon the courage of his soldiers, their effects on the feebler constitutions of the women who accompanied them, may be easily conceived. It was absolutely necessary, however, that they should press forward; and, amid these complicated distresses, the only man whose spirit never sunk for a moment, was the king. Calm, thoughtful, and unshaken by his repeated defeats, he anticipated every difficulty, and, out of the scanty resources which were left him, exerted himself to the utmost to provide against it. Having secured himself from the pursuit of the enemy, as the night approached, it became necessary to look for shelter; and Bruce, who knew the country, found time to dispatch an advanced party, who took possession of a large cave at the head of the glen of Balquhidder. Fires were kindled, which dispelled the close subterranean damps from their wild retreat; skins and furred cloaks were spread on the floor, beds of heather and moss hastily piled up against the walls, and the small allowance of provisions which remained had been cooked for supper, when the king arrived with his wounded knights and faithful women; and having carefully stationed his watches to prevent a surprise, he unbuckled his armour, and courteously entreated

them all to eat their meat with thankfulness, and retire to their repose. Nothing escaped his kind and tender care; the wounded were tended by his own hands—the queen and her ladies conducted, with expressions of admiration for their love and devotedness, to the rustic couches which had been prepared for them; the meanest page or servant was addressed with cheerful, and even jocular expressions; and, as his knights sat round the fire, and talked over the events of the day, Bruce, whose memory was stored with the literature of the times, amused them by anecdotes drawn from the pages of old romance. "Whatever happens," said he, "never despair. Think always that, although it is now our lot to suffer, God may yet relieve us, as he has done by many who were yet harder bested than we, and who, through God's grace, accomplished the purpose which they had on hand. If the heart," added he, "be once discomfited and cast down, the strength of the body sinks along with it; therefore, dear friends, I beseech you, be of good heart, and all will yet go well."*

But although the king bore himself thus cheerfully to his friends, it was evident, in the simple words of his ancient biographer, that "he feigned to make better cheer than he felt;" for his cause became every day more desperate, and the spirits of his men were fast sinking under their misfortunes. The Earl of Athole, who had hitherto borne every reverse with fortitude, suddenly lost all courage and patience, and earnestly requested

* Barbour, p. 46, l. 585.

leave to depart; and Bruce, having consulted with his most confidential friends, became convinced that it was vain to expect he should be able to keep his whole band much longer together, and that a separation had better take place before the spirit of desertion had begun to spread. He resolved, therefore, to send the queen and her women to Kildrummie Castle, whilst he himself remained with a smaller body of his followers in the hills. Nigel, accordingly, the king's youngest brother, with the Earl of Athole and a large escort, were appointed to conduct the ladies into Mar; whilst Bruce, who had determined that himself and the knights who remained with him should take their fortune henceforth on foot, gave up the remaining horses of his party to the escort, and embraced the resolution of forcing a passage to Kintyre, and escaping from thence into the northern parts of Ireland. The parting between the king and his wife and sisters was deeply affecting. His own fortunes were at their lowest ebb. Many of those who now left him, he might never behold again; they had dared for his sake the extremities of cold and hunger, and the perils of war; and even now, it was not the fond and constant hearts of the women that had failed, but the murmurs of the men, which had forced on this separation. To part with such faithful friends, and under circumstances so alarming and dangerous, was a bitter trial. The women wept upon the bosoms, and clung fondly to the necks, of their husbands, fathers, or brothers, and tears were seen on the cheeks of rugged warriors and manly knights, who were little accustomed to such tender

scenes. It was necessary at last to repel the excess of grief, and to tear themselves from these embraces; and Bruce had soon after the satisfaction to hear that his queen and her escort had reached Kildrummie in safety. The foreboding, however, with which they had parted, was bitterly realized in the fate of some of the dearest amongst them, upon whom he now looked for the last time in his life.

The winter soon approached; and the king, with two hundred men, which was all that was now left him, found it impossible to maintain himself amongst the mountains amidst the snow showers which began to fall, and the hunger and cold which every day grew more intense and grievous. He determined, therefore, to push forward as rapidly as he could to Kintyre, from which he trusted to sail for Ireland; and he dispatched Sir Niel Campbell with a small company to procure ships and provisions amongst his kinsmen who inhabited that country, from whom he confidently looked for support and assistance. He then continued his progress to Lochlomond, which he reached on the third day after Campbell had left him, towards evening. It was in vain, however, that he looked along the shore, in hopes of finding a boat to ferry them across the lake; and he was compelled to take up his quarters in a cave near Craigrostan, into the narrow entrance of which he and his men were glad to creep, that they might shelter themselves from the inclemency of the weather. On lying down to sleep, they were suddenly terrified by hearing in the dark a stirring and breathing around them, and began

to fear that they had entered a den occupied by more desperate outlaws than themselves; but, on striking a light, the shaggy countenances and towering horns of a flock of wild-goats presented themselves, and mirth and laughter succeeded to serious alarm. It is said that Bruce was much amused with the adventure, and so pleased with his companions of the night, whose warm breath and shaggy coats were agreeable to men so poorly provided against the winter cold, that he ever after took an especial liking to the goat species; and when he came to be king, made a humorous provision that, on the manors belonging to the crown, all goats should be grass-mail free—that is, should pay no rent for their pasture.*

In the morning, Sir James Douglas, who by this time had completely recovered from his wounds received at Dalry, after a long search, discovered a crazy little boat in a creek, which was so leaky and narrow in its dimensions, that it was impossible it could transport more than three persons at a time, one rowing, and the other two being employed in baling out the water, to prevent it filling and going down. Wretched as was this conveyance, its discovery was hailed with joy by all present; and Bruce and Douglas, with a third companion, throwing themselves into it, passed over the lake, and landed in safety on the other side. The boat was then dispatched for a new freight; and whilst some of the most hardy

* In Craigrostan, there are several caves, amongst which is one, distinguished commonly by the name of King Robert's Cave. M'Gibbon's Parish of Buchanan. Stat. Acct. vol. ix. p. 14.

swam across with their swords in their teeth, and their clothes in bundles upon their backs, the rest awaited the return of their little skiff, and at last, without any disaster, the whole party crossed the lake, and assembled once more around their master. This passage occupied a night and a day, during which time the king not only cheerfully shared every toil with his followers, but supported their drooping spirits by the gaiety of his temper. Whilst they lay on the banks of the romantic lake, over which his men were slowly ferried, he beguiled the hours, and diverted their minds from their misfortunes, by those tales of the heroes of romance, in which he seems to have taken peculiar delight. The story of Fierabras and the Unconquered Oliver, with the adventures of the Twelve Peers of Charlemagne when they were besieged in the city of Eglamour, and relieved by Richard of Normandy, were told to an audience of knights and squires, whose own escapes were scarcely less extraordinary than the marvels to which they listened; and, amused and solaced by the interest of the tale, and the spirit with which it was recounted, they returned with lighter hearts and renewed resolution from the dreams of romance, into the bitter realities with which they were surrounded.

To provide against immediate want was now absolutely necessary; and Bruce divided his little band into two parties, who took different directions into the neighbouring forests, engaging in the chase, no longer as in former days a peaceful and joyous pastime, but a resource to which they were driven by hard necessity. Since the fatal

defeat at Methven in the beginning of June, some of his most faithful adherents, who escaped from the field, had never seen the king, but remained ignorant of his fate. Amongst these was Malcolm, Earl of Lennox, a baron devotedly attached to Bruce, and who, pursued by the English, had retreated into the fastnesses of his own country, the Lennox, where it happened, by a singular coincidence, that he was engaged at the same moment in the same occupation of the chase, and came into the very neighbourhood of the spot where the wanderers had landed. As Bruce winded his horn in the hills, the earl at once recognised the blast, and, knowing it must be the king, ran to the spot. The joy of such a meeting will be readily imagined; it is one of the sweet drops kindly mingled in the cup of human suffering, that the extremity of hardship and privation only gives a keener relish to affection, and a profounder devotedness to loyalty. Lennox rushed into his master's arms, and wept aloud upon his neck, whilst Bruce, deeply moved, fondly pressed him to his bosom, and, kissing him, bade him take comfort, since he saw him alive and well. The earl now observed the haggard plight of his sovereign; and, aware that he and his followers were reduced by famine, made haste to lead them to a retreat where they had plenty of provisions, and sat down to a heartier meal than it had been their lot to enjoy for many days. The country, however, in which they now found themselves, was no place for them to venture on a protracted residence. Although the hereditary property of Lennox, it was full of the

friends of the Comyns; and the Macdowgalls, the Macnaughtans, and the Macnabs, with other septs obeying the Lord of Lorn, had beset the roads and passes, and seduced the vassals of Lennox so effectually from their allegiance, that they were eager to waylay his person, and deliver him to the English.

Bruce accordingly pressed forward, leaving Lennox to assemble as many soldiers as he could trust, and to follow in his galley; nor was it long before Sir Niel Campbell met the royal party with some small vessels which he had collected, in which the king instantly embarked, and steering by the island of Bute, at last gained the coast of Kintyre, where he was hospitably received by Angus of Isla, the Lord of Kintyre, into his castle of Dunaverty.* So keen, however, was now the pursuit, and so beset was the country by his enemies, that Lennox had very nearly fallen into their hands; and Bruce, notwithstanding the inclement season of the year, and the perilous nature of the navigation, after a stay of only three days at

* The castle of Dunaverty is still a noble ruin. It is built on a tremendous precipice, which overhangs the sea at the extremity of the Mull of Kintyre; and the conical rock on which it stands is almost surrounded by the waters. On the land side, the ascent was fortified by a wide fosse, over which a drawbridge was thrown, and defended by three interior walls. It was here also that, in the civil wars, M'Donald, otherwise denominated Alister, son of Coll Kittoch, made his last stand with three hundred Highlanders, who, having surrendered to General Leslie under assurance of their lives, were afterwards put to death. Stat. Acct. vol. iii. pp. 365, 366.

Dunaverty, once more took to his ships; and pushing off from Kintyre, after weathering a dreadful storm, buried himself from the pursuit of his enemies in the little island of Rachrine, about four miles distant from the north coast of Ireland.* The inhabitants of this remote spot, which is scarcely four miles long and two broad, were vassals of the Lord of Kintyre; although at first greatly alarmed by the arrival of the strangers, they soon recovered from their consternation; and understanding the royal quality of their guest, not only flocked round to pay their homage, but performed a more substantial service, by bringing in plenty of provisions. It was now the depth of winter; and the royal wanderer, after a flight, in which he had been wonderfully preserved, at last deemed himself secure.

In the meantime, events of deep interest were passing in Scotland. A severe ordinance was issued by Edward, who, detained by his increasing age and infirmities, proceeded slowly towards the borders of the kingdoms, commanding the immediate apprehension and execution of all who were either present at the slaughter of Comyn, were abettors of that deed, or had dared to harbour the guilty persons and their accomplices. Those who had been in arms against the English government, were at the same time ordered to be seized, dead or alive; and all who were taken in arms after the publication of this ordinance, were to be instantly hanged.† They who had laid down their arms, as well as all,

* Barbour, p. 64. † Ryley, p. 510.

whether laymen or ecclesiastics, who had at any time espoused the party of Bruce, and instigated the people to rise in rebellion, were to be imprisoned during the king's pleasure; and under the most rigid penalties of fine, confiscation, and captivity, all were called upon to rise in arms, and co-operate in the apprehension of those who were guilty of the complicated crimes of rebellion, sacrilege, and murder. Nor was it long before these were shown to be no cursory or verbal orders, by a series of executions, as rapid as they were cruel and unwise. It was one of the darkest and worst features of the state of manners, under the feudal system, that a man's duty, in avenging the death of his chief, was considered paramount to every other obligation; and that the remotest vassal became bound by this ideal obligation, as strictly as the nearest relation. Treachery, therefore, was busily at work against the few remaining supporters of Bruce; and within a few weeks, most of them were delivered into the hands of the enemy. His brother-in-law, Sir Christopher Seton, was betrayed by a villain named Macnab, one of his followers; his castle of Loch Urr, in Galloway, delivered up to the English by Gilbert de Carrick;* and he himself, and his brother, Sir John Seton, instantly executed. The castle of Kildrummie, from which, dreading the result of a siege, Bruce's queen, and his daughter Marjory, had escaped to the sanctuary of St Duthac in

* Barbour, p. 65, l. 245. Crawfurd's Officers of State, p. 21. Stat. Acct. vol. xi. p. 62.

Ross-shire, was invested by the Earls of Hereford and Lancaster, and from its great strength seemed likely to sustain a lengthened siege; but the garrison were corrupted, one of the soldiers set fire to the magazine, and, deprived of the means of subsistence, its defenders were compelled to surrender at discretion. Nigel Bruce, the king's youngest brother, a youth of extreme personal beauty, along with the rest of the barons who had assisted him in the defence, were hurried in chains to Berwick, and immediately hanged. The handsome person and graceful manners of this poor youth are commemorated by the English writers, and appear to have excited unwonted pity in every bosom but that of Edward.* The Earl of Athole was the next victim; he had dared to be present at the coronation of Bruce; he had fought on his side at Methven, and had accompanied him during his disastrous flight. On being seized in attempting to escape beyond seas, it was imagined that his connexion with the royal family of England would mitigate the rigour of his fate; but Edward, with a minuteness in insult and cruelty unworthy of so great a man, commanded him to be hanged on a gallows twenty feet higher than the rest of the Scottish prisoners, and to suffer, in the horrid process of burning and embowelling, the extremest penalties of treason.† Sir Simon Fraser, a veteran and illustrious warrior, who had been the last friend of Wallace, and whose reputation as a military leader extended over the Continent, was defeated in an expiring

* Math. Westminster, p. 455. † Ibid. p. 456.

effort for liberty, which he made at Kirkincleff, near Stirling. Along with him were taken his squire Thomas Boys, Sir Herbert de Morham, and many other knights and barons. These were forthwith carried to London and executed; but to Fraser was allotted the honour of being crowned in mockery, like Wallace, and of having his head fixed upon London Bridge, beside that of his heroic companion.* Along with him suffered Sir David of Inchmartin, Sir Walter Logan, Sir John de Somerville, and others of inferior note; whilst Lamberton, Bishop of St Andrews, Wishart, Bishop of Glasgow, and the Abbot of Scone, who had been taken clad in armour, at the head of their vassals, were thrown into fetters, and conveyed to prison in England.† Edward's severity next turned to female victims. The Queen, her daughter Marjory, and their attendants, having fled to the sanctuary of St Duthac, were sacrilegiously seized by the Earl of Ross, and committed to prison in England. Mary and Christina, two sisters of Bruce—the first the wife of Sir Niel Campbell of Lochow, the second the widow of Sir Christopher Seton—were taken not long afterwards, and imprisoned in the same kingdom; but the extremity of rigour and ingenuity was reserved for the Countess of Buchan, who had placed the crown upon the head of Bruce, and had the misfortune, about the same time, to fall into the hands of the English soldiers, who were scouring the country. Edward, in imitation

* Math. Westminster, p. 456.
† Fordun a Goodal, vol. ii. p. 236.

of a barbarous practice, which he had probably witnessed in Italy, commanded a cage of wood and iron to be constructed in one of the outer turrets of the castle of Berwick, which was next the street, and open to public gaze. Within this singular apartment the countess was placed; no one except the woman to whose keeping she was intrusted was permitted to speak with her; and she was ordered to be so strictly guarded, that escape should be impossible.* Here she remained, to use the words of an ancient English historian, "suspended as a spectacle of eternal disgrace to all who passed by," for the period of four years, till the clemency of Edward II. exchanged the cage of Berwick for a milder imprisonment in the monastery of Mount Carmel.† It presents us with a humiliating picture of the effects of disappointed ambition, in adding strength and exasperation to the passion of revenge, that these executions were commanded by Edward when he was enfeebled by his mortal illness, and looking forward to almost certain death.

To these wounds, which were inflicted upon him through the death or captivity of his dearest friends, nothing remained, but to complete the ruin of the devoted Bruce by the penalties of forfeiture and excommunication,—to strip him bare of his lands and honours, and to outpour

* Rymer, Fœdera Angliæ, vol. ii. p. 1014. Such is the exact description of the cage, in the original order of Edward, in the words of Mathew of Westminster, and of Walter Hemingford, a contemporary historian.

† Rotuli Scotiæ, vol. i. p. 85.

upon him the phials of papal fury. His lordship of Annandale, accordingly, was bestowed on the Earl of Hereford, his maternal property of Carrick upon Henry Percy, and the extensive English estates, which, almost since the date of the Conquest, had been hereditary in the family, were divided by Lord Clifford and others of Edward's nobles. To conclude all, the Cardinal Legate St Sabinus appeared, with great ecclesiastical pomp, at Carlisle, then the head-quarters of Edward, and solemnly excommunicated Bruce and all his adherents, by bell, book, and candle.* At this moment, many of the Scottish nobles, who were in no way intimately connected with the Comyns, awed by these severities, and apparently ignorant of the fate of the king, considered his cause desperate, and made their peace with Edward; amongst which number was his nephew Randolph, afterwards the great Earl of Moray.†

Bruce, in the meantime, ignorant of the miserable fate of his friends, remained, during the winter months, amongst the kind and simple inhabitants of Rachrine, pondering over the defeats with which his career had begun, but, with the thoughtful and elastic vigour of mind which throughout distinguished him, extracting experience from misfortune, and firmness of purpose from repeated failure. With the spring, the spirit of hope and of enterprise revived;

* Hemingford, vol. i. p. 226. "Accensisque candelis et pulsatis campanis, terribiliter excommunicaverunt Dominum Robertum de Brus."

† Leland's Collect. p. 542, vol. i. p. 2.

and, having received some assistance from an Ocean princess who had joined his cause, named Christina of the Isles, he determined on making a descent on Scotland. He dispatched, accordingly, his brothers, Thomas and Alexander, to collect vessels, and levy recruits, in Ireland and the Western Isles, whilst he himself assembled a small fleet of thirty-three galleys, the greatest part of them probably belonging to the Lord of Kintyre, with which he resolved once more to essay his fortune. Previously, however, to his setting sail, he directed Sir James Douglas and Sir Robert Boyd, with a small advanced force, to land in the Isle of Arran, for the purpose of reconnoitring. These two barons reached the island during the night; and finding it in possession of an English officer, Sir John Hastings, who occupied Brodick Castle with a strong garrison, concealed themselves in the woods beside this fortress, and in such a situation that they had a complete view of the shore, which was hard by. Douglas and Boyd lay here till morning dawned, when they discovered three large boats drawn up on the beach, and a party of English soldiers engaged in unlading from them a cargo of provisions, wine, arms, and wearing apparel, with which they proceeded carelessly towards Brodick. In an instant the Scottish chiefs rushed from their ambush in the wood, assaulted and dispersed the English, slew forty soldiers on the spot, and made themselves masters of the whole cargo. The noise of this combat presently brought out a party from the castle; but these were instantly attacked, and driven within their gates by Douglas, whilst

the remainder of the English pushed off their vessels and put to sea. The Scots, in the meantime, who had been accustomed to much hardship, and almost famine, during the winter, joyfully collected their plunder, consisting of wine casks, fresh bread and meat, trunks of clothes, and plenty of arms and armour, which they removed to a valley, where they fortified their rural camp. Here they awaited the arrival of their friends from Rachrine; and, in the meantime, spent their time in hunting.*

In ten days, the small fleet which bore Bruce and his fortunes cast anchor in Arran, consisting of thirty-three galleys, having on board a force of three hundred men. His first object was to get tidings of Douglas; and the meeting of the two parties presents us with a striking picture of the manners of the times. On coming ashore, it was found, by the information of a countrywoman, that a party of soldiers, who were strangers in the island, had taken possession of a neighbouring valley; and the king, suspecting them to be his own men, approached near the spot, and wound his horn. The well-known blast was instantly recognised by Boyd and Douglas, who ran to meet their sovereign. Bruce kissed them cheerfully, enquiring what speed they had made; and they in their turn replied, by carrying him to their mountain hold, displaying their spoils, and communicating their successful adventure. A consultation was now held; and the king determined, that if it were practicable, his first attempt should

* Barbour, pp. 77, 78.

be the invasion of his own country of Carrick, and the recovery, out of the hands of the enemy, of his castle of Turnberry. Before this was finally resolved on, it was thought necessary to send into Carrick a trusty forerunner, named Cuthbert. His orders were to examine the state of the country, to ascertain the disposition of the people, the strength of the enemy, the practicability of the enterprise, and, if he thought there was good chance of success, to light, on a certain day agreed on, a fire upon an eminence called Turnberry Sneuk, which should be a signal for Bruce to leave Arran and attempt a landing upon the coast. On reaching Carrick, however, the messenger found the country so entirely occupied by the English, and Lord Henry Percy with so strong a garrison in Turnberry, that he determined on returning to Bruce to inform him of the desperate nature of the enterprise. Before he could execute his purpose, however, a singular and unforeseen circumstance led to a totally opposite result.

On the day appointed, the king impatiently traversed the beach, and anxiously cast his eyes to the well-known eminence above Turnberry; but no signal appeared, and his heart sickened with deferred hope, as the shades of night descended, and he began to think of returning to his prison in the ocean. At last a spark of fire was discernible upon the sky; and, as Bruce started and strained his eyes upon the object, it gradually increased, till the red flare of the beacon was no longer to be mistaken. Although past the time which had been agreed on, he determined to sail;

and in an instant all hands were at work, launching their galleys, and embarking their little army. During this business, while the king anxiously paced the beach, he was accosted by a Highland woman, who, drawing him aside, insisted on telling his fortune. "Deride me not," said she; "for I am neither mad nor cunning; but, without any effort of my own, the spirit hath been given to me, of discerning the things which are to come. That future course which, to you, is all darkness, now lies clear before me; and I have brought my two sons, who shall accompany you to the battle as hostages for my truth. You are now passing forward to avenge the outrage done to this realm and to yourself by our English enemies. You know not what fortune may befall you, and dream little of the bitter calamities which yet await you in your wars. Yet take courage, and listen to my words. Though sorely pressed, from this moment you shall not leave the land till it has submitted to your dominion. Much you may and must suffer, but the mightiest of your enemies shall not be able to expel you; and, at the last, they shall be utterly discomfited, whilst thou shalt live and die a king." Having said this, the woman called her sons, two strong young men, whom Bruce, of course, readily received amongst his soldiers; and she then returned home, leaving the monarch not a little encouraged by the prediction.*

The fleet now set sail; and, as it was late in the evening, night overtook them before they

* Barbour, p. 84, l. 865.

were midway across the channel. It proved exceedingly dark; not a star was to be seen; and, unprovided with either compass or chart, they steered their course by the fire, which still burnt brightly over Turnberry, and soon arrived at land. On the shore they were met by their messenger, Cuthbert, who had seen the fire, and dreading that his master might mistake it for the signal, watched for his arrival on the beach. By him they were soon made aware of the desperate enterprise which awaited them. "Percy," said he, "occupies Turnberry; but nearly one-half of his force are quartered in the town hard by; their force is great, and the spirit of the country sunk in despair."—"Traitor," cried Bruce, "why then did you light the fire?"—"I lighted no beacon," said he; "and I know not who hath done so; but the moment I observed it, I dreaded this mistake, and watched for your arrival." Bruce was shaken by this intelligence, and required the advice of his friends what was best to be done. "What others may do," said his brother Edward, "I know not; but here will I remain and follow out mine adventure; nor shall any danger that threatens me on land again drive me to the sea." Although of a far wiser and more calculating disposition than the chivalrous baron who uttered this speech, Bruce, on weighing the difficulties on both sides, determined to follow his advice, and, while it was yet night, to attack the division quartered in the town. Approaching, therefore, in perfect silence, and favoured by the darkness, they found the English asleep in careless security, and such was the completeness of the surprise,

that the doors of the wooden houses where they lodged were broken open, and the naked and defenceless victims put to the sword—before Percy's slumbers were broken by the tumult. Nor, when he did awake, was it deemed prudent to attack an enemy of whose numbers he was ignorant, and who had already cut off a great part of his garrison. The success which attended this first attack was highly gratifying to the Scots; and the plunder which fell into their hands, consisting of a large supply of arms, and of the whole camp equipage and war horses of Percy, proved a seasonable reinforcement to the scanty resources of the king.

Not long after this, Bruce was visited in his camp by a lady of that country, whose name Barbour omits, although he informs us she was his near relation. She brought with her the fittest and noblest present which could then be given—forty stout soldiers; whom, to use the expressive words of his ancient biographer, he received "with great daintiness and profound thanks." He then questioned her of the welfare of his friends; and she informed him for the first time of the imprisonment of the queen, the captivity of his sisters, and the cruel death of Nigel Bruce, with his other dear companions, Seton, Athole, and Fraser. At this Bruce was much moved, and tears of grief were mingled with determined purposes of revenge. "Alas!" said he, "how many noble and worthy men have been villainously dealt with for their loyalty to my cause, and their love to my person; but may God grant me health, and their deaths shall be well requited on

this King of England, who thinks, it seems, that my realm of Scotland is too little for me and my barons, and employs his hangmen to rid me of their presence!"* Meanwhile Percy did not dare to issue from Turnberry, but allowed himself to be shut up by Bruce, who ravaged the neighbouring country, and, levying the rents of his hereditary lands in Carrick, collected plenty of provisions, and lived at free quarters amongst his own vassals.† An English force, however, of a thousand strong, was immediately raised in Northumberland, and, as it advanced into Carrick, Bruce, whose numbers were far inferior, retired into the upper part of the country, whilst Percy, under its protection, evacuated Turnberry Castle, and made good his retreat into England.‡

Sir James Douglas, whose lands in Douglasdale had been given by Edward to Lord Clifford, one of the most powerful barons in England, now determined to visit his own country in disguise, and acquaint himself with the state of the enemy. "Never," said he to Bruce—"never shall it be said that Clifford did peaceably enjoy the heritage of Douglas. Whilst I live, and have but one yeoman at my back, he shall not hold it without dispute."—"Go, then," said Bruce, "with my blessing; and let me hear from thee if thou requirest succour." Thus dismissed, Douglas, anxious to avoid suspicion, set off with only two companions, and entering the well-known country of Douglasdale, which he had not visited since

* Barbour, p. 94, l. 160. † Hemingford, p. 225.
‡ Ibid. p. 225.

the happy years of his boyhood, he discovered himself to a faithful vassal of his father, called Thomas Dickson, who, falling at the feet of his young lord, wept for joy and pity. Douglas then acquainted him with the success of the king in Carrick; and Dickson, having concealed him and his servants in a remote chamber, made the friends of the family aware of the return of their chief, and secretly introduced them into his presence. All these precautions were necessary, as the English occupied the neighbouring castle of Douglas in great strength, and the slightest appearance of disaffection was repaid by confiscation and imprisonment. In this secret manner a considerable force was organized, while to the enemy all appeared quiet and submissive; arms and armour were collected, the strongest men in the neighbourhood enlisted in the enterprise, and the arrangements for attacking the English completed. It was resolved, however, as the castle would have defied an open assault, to employ stratagem; and the success of the enterprise was complete. On Palm Sunday, a festival generally held with a mixture of revelry and devotion, the whole of the garrison repaired to the neighbouring chapel of St Bride, leaving none within the fortress but the cook, who was employed in preparing the feast for their return, and the porter, who held the keys. Within the church was Dickson, with some of the stoutest of his men; and Douglas lay in ambush in the neighbourhood, at the head of a strong party of his vassals. To disarm suspicion, and permit him to look out with more freedom, he had thrown an old mantle over

his coat of mail, and carried a flail in his hand like a common countryman; whilst the English, little aware of the eyes that were watching them, stood in the chancel of the church with the peaceful palm branches in their hands, and joining in the litanies which formed the service for the day. A dreadful voice from without now cried, "Douglas, Douglas!" and in an instant this pageant of devotion was changed into a scene of tumult and of blood; Dickson and his party, throwing off the frocks which concealed their armour, attacked their enemies on one side, whilst the countryman, who the moment before had been an object of neglect or contempt, casting away his flail and his mantle, stood before them in glittering arms, and shouted that name of Douglas, already dreaded for valour, and destined to be still more famous throughout many ages of Scottish history. It was impossible to resist this double attack; and although the English made a brave defence, all of them in a short time were either slain or taken prisoners. The conclusion of this enterprise presents us with a revolting picture of the cruelty and determined national hatred which almost invariably accompanies an attempt to conquer and enslave a free people. On returning to the castle, Douglas found the table spread; and, after having plentifully regaled himself and his vassals, he commanded the oaken board and the furniture of the lofty apartment to be cut down, and piled in the form of a huge square or funeral pile upon the stone pavement. Within this he placed the whole stores which he found in the granary or the outhouses, the meat,

flour, meal, hay, malt, and every thing which could be useful to an enemy. He then brought from the cellar the wine tuns with which it was stored, and, striking off their heads, threw them on the top of the heap. The last and most dreadful ingredient was yet to be added; and it is painful to recount a circumstance which tarnishes the fame of so brave a warrior. Douglas commanded the English prisoners to be led forth, and slew them upon the pile, a sacrifice to the manes of Nigel Bruce and his gallant companions, whose limbs were then blackening in the sun above the gates of Berwick, or on the Tower of London. Fire was then set to the whole; and this horrid hecatomb, composed of mingled blood and wine, where the contents of the larder and the granary were foully mixed with mangled human bodies, was consumed in one undistinguished blaze. The castle itself was then razed to the ground; the well poisoned by casting into it the carcasses of the dead horses, and the salt found in the stores; and having collected all the warlike weapons and armour, the silver plate and wearing apparel, Douglas, as he retired from the spot, felt a stern consolation in the reflection, that the hall of his fathers would not soon again afford shelter to the enemies of his country. This dreadful consummation of vengeance was long afterwards known in the country by the name of the Douglas Larder.*

* Barbour, p. 101, l. 410.

"Therefore the men of that countrie,
For sua fele thar mellyt war,
Callet it the 'Douglas Lardner.'"

These successes, although very bravely achieved, were too insulated and trifling to be followed by any decided consequences, and Bruce looked anxiously for the arrival of his brothers from Ireland, who were bringing, he had reason to believe, a large reinforcement; but here he was destined to experience a severe reverse of fortune. On the 9th of February, Thomas and Alexander Bruce, along with Malcolm Mackail, the Lord of Kintyre, and Sir Ranald Crawford, probably the son of the same baron who was hanged by the English at Ayr, landed from Ireland, at the head of a body of seven hundred men. Before, however, they had completed their disembarkation, they were attacked at Loch Ryan, in Galloway, by Duncan Macdowall, a powerful baron of that country, and almost entirely cut to pieces. Crawford and the two brothers were grievously wounded, and instantly conveyed by the savage Celtic chief to the head-quarters of Edward at Carlisle, who, with his usual severity to every adherent of Bruce, ordered them to instant execution.* This defeat struck a panic for a while into the followers of the king; and as English troops now poured into Scotland from every quarter, his little army, enfeebled and dispirited, dwindled away by degrees, till he was left in Carrick with only two hundred men. Clifford, in the meantime, had rebuilt the castle of Douglas, and garrisoned it anew; Sir Aymer de Valence, the governor of Scotland, was concentrating his force at Edinburgh, and,

* Fordun a Goodal, vol. ii. p. 233.

by his order, Sir Ingram Umfraville advanced into Ayrshire, at the head of an army, which it would have been madness in Bruce to have attempted to meet in the open country. It is probably to this disconsolate period of the career of the hero that there belongs an anecdote which, although preserved only by tradition, is too pleasing and too characteristic to be omitted. When driven from haunt to haunt by his enemies, uncertain, in the complicated difficulties with which he was surrounded, whether it would not be advisable at once to renounce the daring and desperate enterprise in which he was engaged, and become a voluntary exile from Scotland, he had retreated into a wretched hovel, where he threw himself down to snatch a short interval of repose. Here, as he lay on a heap of straw, and bitterly pondered on a plan for engaging in the holy war, and for ever forsaking his country, his eye was involuntarily directed to a spider, which, engaged in the process of constructing its web, had suspended itself by its long and slender thread from the roof above his head, and endeavoured, with a perseverance which was unconquered by repeated defeats, to swing itself from one joist or rafter to another. Bruce watched its efforts, and unconsciously became interested in them. Six times it had essayed to reach the destined point; six times it had failed, and fallen back. He was led, not unnaturally, to draw a parallel between himself and the insect, whose determination of purpose he admired; and, with a superstition which no one acquainted with the human mind will pronounce unnatural, he resolved that he would regulate

his own conduct by its ultimate success or failure. The seventh effort was made; the spider attained its object, and fixed its web; and Bruce, not a little encouraged by the augury, dreamed no more of deserting Scotland.* He accordingly retired into the more mountainous and inaccessible parts of the country; and, whilst the English beset his haunts on every side, had the good fortune to escape the toils which were laid for him.

There was indeed a deep and romantic interest about the fate of Bruce, which could not fail to enlist upon his side all the more generous feelings of our nature; so that from the common people amongst whom he lurked, and especially, it is said, from the women of the country, who loved him for the perils with which he was surrounded, he was in the habit of receiving private information which was of the utmost service. An adventure which happened to him about this time, evinced this in a very striking manner. Umfraville, despairing of being able to seize him by open force, found means to corrupt one of his followers, in whose fidelity he entirely trusted, and who on many occasions had warned him of the approach of the enemy. This person was a stout yeoman of Carrick, who, with his two sons, both of them powerful men, had from this circumstance gained an intimacy with the king, which gave them at all times access to his person, and an acquaintance with his most secret haunts. These

* This tradition is strongly corroborated by the fact, that at the present day in Scotland, no individual of the name of Bruce will willingly kill a spider.

men, bribed by the English leader, basely formed a resolution of assassinating their master, and only waited for an opportunity, when Bruce received secret information of their meetings with Umfraville, and the designs of which it was meant he should be the victim. It happened that, in the wild district where he then concealed himself, there was a little wooded valley watered by a mountain rivulet, and distinguished by so much sweetness and retirement, that it formed a favourite haunt of the king. In this spot, when he was accompanied only by the boy who waited on him, Bruce was met by the three traitors, who had watched his steps, and chosen the place as best adapted for their nefarious purpose. As they approached within a short distance, Bruce commanded them to stand still; and snatching his bow and arrows from the page, bade him remove a little way off, as these men had evil intentions. Their appearance and conduct indeed evinced this; for they were all armed to the teeth; and although they professed much loyalty as they drew near, they yet kept their hands upon their weapons. "Villains," cried Bruce, "approach not a step nearer, or you shall dearly rue it! I know that you have sold me to the enemy; if you have aught to say, speak it where you are."—"Alas! my lord," cried the foremost, stealing forward as he spoke, "it ill becomes you to suspect us;" but ere another word was uttered, an arrow from the king pierced him in the eye, and, entering the brain, laid him dead in an instant. The second then rushed forward, and attacked Bruce with his battle-axe; whilst the third, who was armed with a spear, engaged

with him at the same moment; but neither of them, either in personal strength, or in the use of their weapons, were at all equal to their single antagonist; and, after a short combat, both lay dead at the king's feet. The trembling page now ran up, and assisted his master in arranging his disordered dress, and wiping his sword. "Alas! my lord," said he, "how soon hast thou rid thyself of these three villains!"—"Beware, boy," said his master, "of treachery. Three braver men than those who have fallen, you will seldom meet with; but treason gave them faint hearts, and proved their ruin."*

On another occasion, the king, whose company was now diminished to sixty soldiers, made a narrow escape. It was already night, when he received intelligence that a force of two hundred Galwegians, accompanied by bloodhounds, were on their march to attack his encampment, which was defended in the rear by a rapid mountain stream, whose banks were steep and wooded. This he instantly crossed; and, throwing the defile between himself and the enemy, drew up his men in a swampy level about two bow-shots' distance from the river. He then commanded them to hold themselves still, keeping a strict watch, whilst he and two soldiers went forward to reconnoitre. The place itself was admirably fitted for defence, as the ravine could only be passed by a single path, which led down to a ford, over the stream, and the way was so steep and rocky, that one soldier at a time could alone advance

* Barbour, p. 108, l. 650.

through it. Of this Bruce was well aware; and stationing himself at the top, he calmly awaited the enemy. The moon, in the meantime, had risen brightly; and, whilst the king was himself in the shade, he could distinctly discern the approach of any one on the opposite bank. All these circumstances favoured his enterprise, and justified the apparent rashness of his resolution in awaiting with only two attendants the approach of two hundred men. For a while all was silence, and the flow of the river, or the scream of the wild animals that haunted its banks, alone broke the stillness of the night. Soon, however, the deep-mouthed baying of a hound was heard in the distance; and, after a while, the mounted figures of the Galwegians were seen appearing, for a moment, on the brink of the opposite bank, and plunging, with their horses, in rapid succession, into the bosom of the wood, the loud dashing of the horses' feet then told the king that they had passed the ford; and he concluded, from a short and sudden pause, that they hesitated about entering the defile which wound up the bank. This uncertainty, however, did not last; for the next moment he could discern their arms gleaming in the moonlight, through the dark foliage; horseman after horseman appeared pressing up the path; and Bruce, having first dispatched the two soldiers who were with him to bid his men advance, stood ready, guarding the gorge, till their return. In a few minutes the wild mountaineers were upon him; but, slightly armed, and compelled, by the path, to advance singly, they stood little chance against a knight of great per-

sonal strength, armed in complete steel, and having the advantage of the ground. The first was slain almost instantly, transfixed by his spear; and Bruce, as he fell from his horse, drew his short dagger, and, stabbing the animal, tumbled him over his rider, so as effectually to block up the pathway, and compel the next who followed him to charge over the body. Impeded in this way, and driving blindly forward, he soon met the same fate as his companion; whilst the king, well breathed, and choosing his best moment of attack, found little difficulty in slaying the third, as he endeavoured to urge his horse up the bank, and called upon his followers to support him. The dead bodies and wounded horses of the mountaineers now formed a ghastly barrier around Bruce; and as the Galwegians successively, but vainly, endeavoured to force it, they were met by the same dreadful sword, which seemed to turn every way, and, yelling with pain and fury, either backed their horses into the ford, or fell wounded upon the bodies of their predecessors. Meanwhile, during this extraordinary combat, the soldiers had regained Bruce's encampment, and Sir Gilbert de la Haye, hastily assembling his men, pressed forward at full speed. The noise of their advance was soon heard by the Galwegians; and, dreading to be attacked by a superior force, and disheartened with the loss of so many of their companions, they retired from the ground, and abandoned the pursuit. On coming up, the soldiers found the king sitting bareheaded on the bank, having cast aside his helmet to cool himself in the night air. Although

much exhausted, and sprinkled with blood, he was unwounded; and, after having wiped his brows, and washed his hands in the stream, he informed his friends of the process by which he had defended himself; and, pointing to the pass, which was choked up with dead bodies, gave God the praise for his deliverance from his enemies.*

It was about this time that the Good Sir James Douglas, who still lurked, at the head of a considerable body of men, in the district of Douglasdale, attempted a second attack upon his own castle of Douglas, which had been rebuilt by Clifford; and, although he failed in making himself master of it, cut off, by a successful ambuscade, the greater part of the garrison. He then joined Bruce with his soldiers; and although their united forces, at this moment, made up only four hundred men, such was their confidence in the mode of tactics which they had adopted, and in their intimate knowledge of the country, that they did not hesitate to await the advance of the Earl of Pembroke, and of Bruce's inveterate enemy, John of Lorn, at the head of an infinitely superior force of English cavalry and hardy Highlanders. It was, indeed, not difficult for Bruce and Douglas, as the English cavalry advanced, to fall back into the wild and mountainous districts which lay in their rear, and where, impeded by extensive morasses, and almost impassable forests, it would have been impossible for horsemen, heavily armed, to act with effect; but the mountaineers, which were led by Lorn, a body of eight hundred strong, were

* Barbour, pp. 110—118.

more formidable enemies. They were bred to war in a country more rugged than that to which Bruce retreated. They were fleet, hardy, and devotedly attached to their chief, in whose determined purposes of revenge they cordially partook, and for whom they were ready to sacrifice their lives. It was, accordingly, soon perceived by the king, that he had to do with an enemy of great vigilance and military skill. Lorn, having separated from the Earl of Pembroke, led his men, by a circuitous route, into the rear of Bruce's position, expecting that the advance of the English commander, who kept the plain, and rode in a strong and deep square, might induce the Scottish leaders, amongst whom, at this time, was Edward Bruce, whose headlong courage bordered upon rashness, to desert their strongholds, and hazard an attack; nor was this expectation disappointed. Bruce, who saw nothing of Lorn, and imagined that he had kept open the strong country in his rear, advanced boldly into the plain, and engaged the squadron of Pembroke, along with whom he had the mortification to see the banner of his sister's son, Thomas Randolph. In a moment, however, Lorn, at the head of his mountaineers, charged him with their broadswords and Lochaber-axes, uttering, at the same time, those yells which characterised their savage warfare; and the king, placed between the attack of two bodies, either of which were more than thrice his number, practised a manœuvre which had been suggested by the singular circumstances of danger into which he had of late been frequently thrown, and which was well calculated to baffle their efforts at the very moment

when they seemed to be certain of success. When hard pursued, his party were accustomed suddenly to split into several bands, which, disappearing in the woods or the mountains, took separate directions; so that the enemy, intent upon getting the king into their hands, were left at a fault as to the division they ought to follow, not knowing which he commanded. To this resource Bruce was now driven; and, as Lorn and Pembroke pressed hard upon him, his little band suddenly divided into three parts, and fled in different ways through the wood; but, in the present instance, the stratagem was rendered useless by the cunning and foresight of Lorn, who had managed, in some way which is not explained, to get possession of a large bloodhound, which had been trained by Bruce, and fed, it is said, by his own hand. The sagacity and affection of this favourite animal were now turned against his master; and the dog, being brought to the spot where the party had separated, after questioning for a few minutes, at once struck upon the king's foot, and followed it with an unerring fidelity, which pointed the way to Lorn, and left little chance of escape. Again and again the few who remained with Bruce divided and scattered themselves, with the hope of eluding the chase, or setting the sleuth-hound at fault; but nothing could divert him from the keenness and pertinacity of his scent; and Bruce, who was, at last, left with a single follower, had resolved to turn and sell his life as dearly as he might, when they reached a wooded valley, which was intersected by a running stream. This offered him a last resource for his escape; and it proved

successful. The king dashed into the stream, and, wading up its course for a hundred yards, sprung, without touching the banks, upon the twisted branches of an oak which hung over the water, and swinging himself, for a short way, from tree to tree, at last leapt upon the ground, and continued his retreat. On reaching the spot, the bloodhound was completely thrown out; and Lorn and his soldiers, after many vain attempts to recover the track, found themselves compelled to desist entirely from the pursuit.*

Bruce, however, was well aware that, although he had escaped from one imminent peril, the country was beset by his enemies; and even when faint with labour and want of food, he dreaded to return towards the low country, where he could alone experience relief. Accompanied, therefore, by no one but his foster-brother, he pressed forward through the wood, and entered upon a wild and desolate moor, where he had not travelled far, before they saw approaching them three strong and savage-looking men, armed after the Highland fashion, with broadswords and Lochaber-axes, and one of them bearing a fat sheep thrown over his shoulder. On coming up, they all saluted; and the mountaineers, being asked where they were travelling, answered that they sought for the king, to whose party they would gladly join themselves. Bruce, however, strongly suspected that the men belonged to Lorn, and knew him well, although they affected ignorance; yet, having fasted a long while, he was eager to have a

* Barbour, pp. 130, 131.

share of the sheep which they carried, and consented that they should travel in company. "We are strangers, however," said he, "and the country is in a wild state. Till we are better acquainted, therefore, it will be expedient that we travel in two parties. Go you three in front, and we two shall follow behind." Proceeding in this cautious way, they came, as night began to close upon them, to a ruinous and lonely house, which they found deserted by its inhabitants, but where they were glad to take up their quarters; and the strangers, having kindled a fire, slew the sheep, and invited the king and his foster-brother to sit down and eat. "We must not yet so freely mix together," said Bruce; "and in these rude and treacherous times, it is not a twelve hours' acquaintance we ought to admit to bed and board. By your leave, my friend and I shall kindle our own fire, and eat our supper by ourselves, whilst you keep the other side of the house, and do the same. Compelled to consent to this, the meat was divided; and after the conclusion of their silent and unsocial repast, the strangers threw themselves down to apparent rest, whilst the king and his foster-brother, whose suspicions were still alive, resolved to watch and sleep by turns. Both, however, had gone through excessive fatigue; and this, combined with the irresistible propensity to sleep which succeeds a hearty meal, rendered their task extremely difficult. At last, sleep unconsciously surprised both; and the three villains, whose eyes, from under their plaids, had watched their victims, stole forward to complete their murderous purpose. They

reached them unperceived; and their swords already gleamed above their heads, when the king, agitated by a dream, or startled by their footsteps, suddenly awoke and sprung upon his feet, in time only to see his faithful companion struck dead by an axe. The villains, however, had roused his avenger; and their resistance against Bruce, furious for the murder of his friend, and fully armed, was brief and unavailing. One after one, they sank beneath his vengeance; and as the morning dawned upon the desolate dwelling where this tragedy had been acted, the king, disconsolate for the loss of his foster-brother—a tie which, according to the feelings and superstition of the times, was considered dearer almost than that of blood itself—once more set out alone upon his melancholy journey.

It was not long before he reached the house where he had agreed to meet his men, after he was compelled to disperse them, and fly from Lorn and his sleuth-hound; but none had yet appeared. The mansion, however, was kept by a faithful woman, who, although a stranger to Bruce's person, was known to favour the cause; and the king entered it without fear. "Who are you? and whence come you?" said the hostess. "A soldier and an outlaw," replied Bruce. "Then, welcome," said she, "for his sake who, like you, is a houseless wanderer, although our lawful king. Gladly would I now see him, and joyfully afford him shelter." At this moment, the tramp of horse was heard on the outside of the cottage, and Bruce started on his feet, and drew his sword, fearful of being betrayed to the enemy. It was Sir

James Douglas, however, with his own men; and alarm gave way to mirth and pleasure as they crowded round their sovereign, and the joyful hostess perceived that the weary stranger was the king himself. A consultation was now held as to their future measures; and Douglas informed them that, on his way thither, he had passed so near the enemies' camp, as to have been able exactly to ascertain the position of an advanced party, to which he could easily lead them.* "I marvel not," said Bruce, "they allowed you to come so near, for they are weary with this day's labour; they believe they totally dispersed us, and, therefore, sleep securely. It were an easy matter could we attack them to-night, to work them greater evil than they have done this day to ourselves." The design was no sooner suggested, than it was carried into successful execution. Under cover of night, the advanced post of the English was surprised and surrounded; upwards of a hundred were slain upon the spot, and the rest dispersed, or made prisoners. In consequence of this discomfiture, the Earl of Pembroke retreated upon Carlisle, determined to reinforce his army, and dislodge Bruce with an overwhelming superiority of force.

Nor ought this to have been a difficult task; for at this time, the greatest number which the Scottish monarch could bring into the field, did not exceed three hundred men; but the opinion which began to be now generally entertained of his uncommon personal prowess, and of the skill and ability which he had shown in maintaining the war with

* Barbour, p. 137, l. 530.

so inferior a force, in a country covered with his enemies, operated powerfully in giving confidence to the Scottish leaders, and in spreading a spirit of distrust and faint-heartedness amongst their enemies. He occupied, therefore, a strong and narrow pass in Glentruel, defended on each side by mountainous and rugged ground, where it was impossible for cavalry to act with effect, and protected in front by a wood, through which lay the road to Carlisle. The country, too, was not only strong in a military point of view, but abounded with venison; and the king, after the retreat of the Earl of Pembroke, enjoyed daily the relaxation of the chase—an occupation which, as their provisions had lately been greatly reduced, was as much a work of necessity, as of recreation. In this manner, after the complicated perils and privations which they had endured, the days passed in much solace and contentment; and relaxing somewhat in that vigilance which he commonly exercised, Bruce was not aware that the Earl of Pembroke, along with the Lords Clifford and De Vaux, and leading with him a body of fifteen hundred men, had approached within a few miles of his encampment in Glentruel. The Scots, however, had the good fortune to seize a spy sent forward by the English; and informed, in this manner, of the advance of the enemy, availed themselves so ably of the ground, and received them with such determined resolution, that the vaward, under command of De Vaux, were completely repulsed, and so severely cut up, that Pembroke once more found it necessary to retreat into England.

Encouraged by these successes, which, although on a small scale, gave confidence to his soldiers, and imparted experience to himself, Bruce descended from the mountainous district into the plain country, and reduced under his dominion the whole of Kyle and Cunninghame. Annandale, Nithsdale, Galloway, and the rich province of Lanarkshire, were all, however, strongly occupied by the English; and Sir Philip de Moubray immediately advanced, at the head of a thousand cavalry, from the castle of Bothwell, with the intention of driving Bruce, whose head-quarters were now at Galston, in Ayrshire, once more into the high country. The intimate knowledge of the localities of this district, and the system of obtaining private information of the motions of the enemy, began now to confer a decided superiority upon the Scots; and Sir James Douglas, acquainted by his spies that Moubray meant to take the road which was known at that day by the name of Mackyrnock's Way, although he could bring against him only a body of forty soldiers, availed himself with so much skill of the ground, that he surprised and completely routed the advance led by Moubray himself, and compelled him to fly alone, and at full speed, through Kilmarnock and Ardrossan, to the castle of Innerkip, near Largs; whilst the rear division, in great confusion, and with considerable loss, retraced their steps to Bothwell.*

Incensed at these repeated disasters, and strengthened by a reinforcement from England,

* Barbour, p. 151, l. 41.

the Earl of Pembroke became aware that, for the credit of his government in Scotland, some decided step should be taken; and in the chivalrous spirit of the times, sent a message to the king of Scotland, with a challenge to leave his encampment, and meet him in a pitched field, at Loudon Hill, upon the 10th of May. This defiance Bruce accepted; and unless we believe, what is by no means improbable, that his intimate knowledge of the ground chosen by the English earl, convinced him that he might fight with every advantage, it is impossible not to blame that rashness, which threw away the chances of a war where national freedom was at stake, for the fantastic honour of chivalry and knighthood. The challenge, however, was given—the meeting agreed on; and Bruce immediately rode to Loudon Hill to examine the ground.

The place where he determined to await the enemy was a broad field, through the middle of which passed the high road, and which was defended on either side by an extensive morass, impassable for cavalry. In this field, Bruce constructed three strong dikes, parallel to each other, and joining the two morasses, the distance between the dikes being a little more than a bowshot; whilst a gap, or "slap," as it is denominated by the contemporary biographer of Bruce, was left in each dike, of such width, that five hundred horsemen might be drawn up in it in line. These dispositions sufficiently explain themselves. If drawn from his first intrenchment, the king could retire behind the second dike, and should this also be carried, the third was still in his rear; whilst his

flanks were protected by the morass, and the hills on each side rendered it almost impossible for the enemy to turn them. Having completed his preparations, Bruce, with an army which included six hundred fighting men, besides an equal number of "rabble," such as baggage-drivers and car -followers, proceeded on the 9th of May, the evening before the battle, to a spot called Little London, from which he commanded an excellent view of the country through which the English forces must advance.

On the morning of the 10th, the sun r... brightly; and as the early mists rolled away from the face of the country, the English army, which was nearly t... thousand strong, was seen in the distance, making a glorious appearance, and divided into two echelons, at a short distance from each other. "Their burnished helmets," says a contemporary writer, "their spears, and coat-armour, made a blaze which irradiated the whole country. To any one who saw the waving pennons, the superb trappings of their armed horses, the embroidered banners, the silken surcoats, decorated with the devices of the knights, and their noble and warlike figures, they appeared more like an angelic, than a mortal host."* On the advance of this splendid phalanx of chivalry, Bruce, having left his baggage on a hill in the rear, descended with his little army into the plain, and occupied the interval in the first dike or intrenchment. His men, with the exception of the leaders, who were mounted, fought on foot

* Barbour, p. 157.

and having said a few words of encouragement, and solemnly appealed to God that he would strengthen them to defend their right, he drew them up in a close square—the spears of the first rank being levelled at the height of the horses' breasts, and those of the ranks behind presented obliquely, offering in his mode of drawing them up, a deep and serried front of sharp steel, which, if the soldiers stood firm, it was almost impossible to penetrate. The English knights, however, who formed the first echelon of Pembroke, did not hesitate a moment; but, without adverting to the strength of the position, charged the Scots at full speed, stooping their heads to their horses' necks, and driving forward with an impetuosity, which, to a spectator, might have appeared irresistible. The shock was terrible; but it was brief; and in less than a quarter of an hour, the leading division of the English army presented a striking example of the great superiority of infantry over cavalry, if drawn up in favourable ground, and under a skilful leader. The leading knights were unhorsed, and slain, either by the spear, or by the short knives of the Scots; the horses, mad with wounds, or deprived of their riders, carried panic and disorder into the rear ranks; and these again, attempting to push forward, were met by the same fate as their companions, and brought the same dismay amongst those upon whom they were driven back. In a few minutes, the ground was covered by slain or wounded horsemen; and multitudes, attempting to escape through the broken ground, or across the morass, were either choked and smothered

in the soft soil, or overtaken and put to death. The confusion, too, was much increased by the narrowness of the firm ground, on which the little band of Scottish spearmen stood and fought with ease; but which was so ill suited to accommodate the larger bodies of the English, that their very superiority in numbers proved one great cause of their discomfiture. The king himself, along with his brother Edward Bruce, and Sir James Douglas, now led forward the Scottish line, and charged the second echelon, which was commanded by Pembroke in person, with so much fury, that after a short resistance, it was dispersed and broken;—though with little loss, as Bruce, in this early part of his career, was unable to bring even a small body of cavalry into the field; and to have attempted a pursuit, to any distance, on foot, would have been dangerous, as well as useless. The defeat, however, was of that decisive nature, that the Earl of Pembroke, unable to rally his men, fled rapidly to the castle of Ayr, and from thence, retreated once more into England.*

This battle was fought by Bruce with six hundred men, besides the rabble, and camp followers, who amounted to somewhat above the same number; whilst, on the other hand, the English army was three thousand strong, and composed, as far as it is possible to ascertain, entirely of cavalry, admirably armed and mounted. In the selection of the ground, and the previous dispositions made by the king, it is easy to

* Barbour, p. 157. Hemingford, p 236.

discern the working of a clear military judgment extracting valuable instruction from his defeat at Methven, and his fatal surprise by the Lord of Lorn. Neither is it difficult, in the history of his future successes in war, to detect a constant reference to the lesson first taught him at Loudon, as to the great superiority of infantry in a Scottish war; and against an enemy so powerful in cavalry as the English. The consequences of the victory were apparent in the numerous recruits which soon joined the king; and the emboldened confidence with which he now maintained his position in the low country. With this increased force, he attacked Ralph Monthermer, Earl of Gloucester, on the third day after the battle of Loudon-hill, and defeated him with such slaughter, that he was compelled to fly to the castle of Ayr, and there to shut himself up, along with the remains of Pembroke's army, which had thrown themselves into that fortress.*

News of these repeated reverses reached Edward I., as he lay with his court at Carlisle, where he had been detained for many months by illness. This great monarch was now upon his deathbed; and the last hours of a life, devoted to ambition and to glory, were embittered by seeing the conquests, which, he flattered himself, he had secured and consolidated, falling gradually from his grasp; and the people, whom, after fifteen years' incessant toil, he had believed to be finally subdued, once more risen in arms to assert their freedom. The report of

* Trivet, p. 346.

the victories over Pembroke and the Earl of Gloucester, effectually roused him; summoning his whole military vassals to assemble at Carlisle, he persuaded himself that the violence of his disease had abated; and offered up his litter, in which he had hitherto followed his troops, above the high altar in the Cathedral of Carlisle. He then mounted his horse, and attempted to lead his army into Scotland. But, in four days, he had only advanced six miles; and, after having reached an obscure village on the borders, named Burgh upon Sands, he expired there, on the 7th of July, 1307, leaving his mighty and imperfect projects of conquest to a successor, in all respects the opposite of his father; and directing, with his last breath, that his bones, after being separated from the flesh, by a process which he himself described, should be carried, along with the army, into Scotland, to remain unburied, till its conquest was once more completed, and its proud rebellion subdued. Under that melancholy delusion, also, which seeks to soothe and alleviate the consciousness of injustice and of cruelty, by the consolations, not of religion, but of superstition, he directed his heart to be carried, with great pomp and solemnity, to Jerusalem.*

Both these requests were disregarded by his successor. The "Hammer of the Scots," as his epitaph styles him,† was buried, without any

* Hemingford, p. 237. Trivet, p. 317. Froissart, vol. i. c. 27.

† The epitaph is one hexameter line:

"Edwardus longus Scotorum malleus hic est."

preparatory operation or extraction of the heart, at Westminster, beside his father; and the royal army advanced into Scotland, to commence a campaign, which, so far from completing the reduction of that country, was crowned by no single success,—and concluded in a speedy and ignominious retreat. Edward II., impatient of the fatigues and annoyances of war, yet ashamed to disband his army, pushed forward into Ayrshire, as far as Cumnock, raised the siege of the castle of Ayr, where Ralph Monthermer was beleaguered by the Scots, appointed the Earl of Pembroke governor of the kingdom, and instantly retired into his own dominions. So soon as the royal army withdrew, the King of Scotland, and his brother, Edward Bruce, broke down into Galloway; and traversing this wild district, with a force which kept the English garrisons within their castles, compelled the smaller barons and landholders to submit to his authority; and in those places where this was either refused or eluded, wasted the country with fire and sword. By this time, Edward had reached York; where, ever changeable and capricious in his measures, he superseded the Earl of Pembroke in his government of Scotland, and committed the supreme civil and military power in that kingdom, to John de Bretagne, Earl of Richmond, the nephew of his father. Richmond was commanded to keep, in his own household, a body of sixty men-at-arms;—he was allowed the sum of ten merks a-day for their maintenance; and the sheriffs and officers of the northern border countries received orders to assemble their united strength; and to march

against Bruce, who, to use the words of the original deed, was at that moment committing, with a high hand, every species of robbery, homicide, and fire-raising, within Galloway and the adjacent districts. He had been opposed by John St John, who commanded the English, and a powerful chieftain of the Macdowall family, a Galwegian sept which had been invariably and bitterly hostile to the king; and whilst Pembroke, the governor, proceeded on his march into Galloway, at the head of a force which far outnumbered Bruce's, the Earl of Dunbar, with the barons of St Clair, Keith, Abernethy, Hastings, and De Vaux, received directions to join him with their feudal services, and to co-operate against the insurgents.* It was impossible for Bruce to hold the country of Galloway against the united forces of Richmond, St John, and the Scottish barons, whose enmity, in the commencement of his career, appears to have been even more inveterate than that of the English; having concentrated his whole force, he retreated, therefore, deliberately before the Earl of Richmond, managing to keep the enemy in check, although he did not venture to give them battle; and aware that the total deficiency of supplies, in a barren and wasted country, would soon compel them to disperse.

In the meantime, he determined to give occupation to his own army, by an expedition into the north of Scotland, across the great barrier, then called the Mount, formed by that range of high mountains which throw themselves athwart the

* Fœdera Angliæ, vol. iii. p. 14.

country from the border of the Mearns to the head of Loch-Rannach, and which, in the time of Bede, appear to have formed the boundary between the kingdoms of the Northern and Southern Picts. Bruce knew, that these strong Highland districts were, for the most part, devoted to the interest of his mortal enemies, the Comyns; but he trusted, that his early friend and supporter, the Bishop of Moray, and two powerful barons, Sir Alexander, and his brother, Sir Simon Fraser, would be able to join him with a considerable force; and was determined, at all events, although it should be with inferior numbers, to try the strength of his opponents. He set out, accordingly, accompanied by his brother, Edward Bruce, the Earl of Lennox, Sir Gilbert de la Haye, and Sir Robert Boyd; leaving in the low country Sir James Douglas, whose remarkable talents for war began to be fully appreciated by his master, and who was eager to make a third attempt to wrest, out of the hands of the enemy, his paternal property of Douglasdale, and to expel them, at the same time, from the forests of Jedburgh and Selkirk. The details of this northern expedition are unfortunately involved in considerable obscurity. On the borders of the Highlands, Bruce was joined by the two Frasers, leading with them a considerable body of armed retainers; and advancing, with his united force, to Inverness, he made himself master of the castle; and, with a policy which, from this time forward, he invariably adopted, destroyed the fortifications, and dismantled and rendered uninhabitable the whole circumjacent buildings, so as to make

it impossible that it should again be garrisoned by the enemy. He then proceeded against the remaining castles in this northern region; and, profiting by the terror which his name and his successes created in the bosoms of the petty chiefs, amongst whom the Highland districts were divided, he rapidly attacked and reduced them, pulled down their mountain fortresses, and expelled them from those remote and solitary glens or valleys, from which they issued out to obey the commands of the more potent lords, beneath whose banner they fought. In a few months, there was scarcely a castle left in the north, which Bruce had not taken and dismantled;* after which, having received intelligence that John Comyn, Earl of Buchan, along with Sir David de Brechin, and a large English force under the command of Sir John Mowbray, had assembled on the borders between Banffshire and Garvyach, he advanced against them, and, after a slight resistance, compelled them to retreat towards Aberdeen.

In the midst of these successes, a severe disease attacked the king, which, for a while, assumed the most mortal symptoms, undermining, by rapid degrees, his bodily strength, and producing so melancholy a depression of spirits, that his bro-

* "Montes pertransiens, usque Inverness pervenit; castrum ejusdem manu forti cepit, et ipsum, occisis custodibus, ad terram prostravit. Simili modo per omnia fecit de omnibus castris, ceterisque fortaliciis in aquilonibus partibus constitutis, cum suis habitatoribus, donec usque le Slenach cum suo exercitu perveniret."—Fordun a Goodal, vol. ii. p. 234.

ther Edward, conceiving that the situation which the army then held was too much exposed, retreated towards the coast, placing Bruce, who was too feeble to mount his horse, in a litter. In this manner they proceeded to Slaines, then denominated Slenath, where they intrenched themselves in a strong position upon the sea-coast, and awaited the recovery of the king. What was the precise nature of his malady does not appear; but it had been induced, in all probability, by that life of hardship to which he had been so long exposed. Since the date of the defeat at Methven, till his expedition into the north,* Bruce had, for nearly two years, suffered the utmost extremities of famine and fatigue; and the effects of inclement seasons, unwholesome food, and perpetual mental anxiety, began to make an impression upon a constitution, originally, indeed, of great vigour, yet unable to resist such constant drains upon its strength. It was, therefore, with the deepest sympathy and alarm, that his captains witnessed the increasing weakness of their master, and heard, at the same moment, that the Earl of Buchan, aware of the situation of Bruce, was advancing to drive them from their intrenchments. Nor was it long before the vaward of this proud baron appeared, composed principally of archers—who, for three days, kept up a constant discharge of arrows upon the Scots, as they lay behind their barriers; and, although they failed to carry the intrench-

* From 19th June, 1306, to 22d May, 1308.

ments by escalade, slew and wounded great numbers of the king's men.

The Scots now judged it expedient to abandon their camp at Slaines, where they began to be in want of provisions, and to retire upon Strathbogie; but their retreat, under the conduct of Edward Bruce, was managed with so much skill, that, although the enemy amounted to double their numbers, they did not venture to attack them.* A faint hope of the recovery of Bruce began now to be entertained; and, although still so feeble, that he lay, during the retreat, in a litter, which was placed in the centre of the square, yet, after a few days' stay at Inverury, there was an evident amelioration; the disease seemed to lose strength, and symptoms of returning health and energy gave the utmost delight to his friends, who watched over him with an affection superior, says an old historian, to that which they would have felt even for a brother. In the meantime, Buchan and Mowbray, having concentrated their whole force at Old Meldrum, determined once more to attack them upon their march; and, for this purpose, dispatched Sir David de Brechin, Bruce's nephew, at the head of an advanced party, who drove in the king's rear division, and, pressing forward to within a short distance of the spot where Bruce lay, slew some of the soldiers who guarded the litter.† The monarch, although still enfeebled by sickness, was much moved with this insolence of his nephew, and appears to have considered it as a species of

* Barbour, p. 170, 171. † Ibid. p. 172.

military affront, which he was imperiously called upon to resent. To the astonishment of those who surrounded him, he rose from the bed, commanded them instantly to arm him; and, calling loudly for his war-horse, which he had not mounted for months, declared that he would lead his troops in person against the enemy. His friends remonstrated; and, after arraying the host for battle, entreated the king to remain in his litter, within the encampment, whilst they proceeded to the attack; but he continued deaf to their earnest entreaties, and, although still so weak that he was lifted into the saddle, and supported by a soldier on each side, he placed himself at the head of his army, and attacked the troops of Buchan with so much fury, that, after a short resistance, he put them to a total rout, pursuing the remains of their army, with much slaughter, as far as Fivy, upwards of twelve miles from the scene of action. The consequence of this complete dispersion of the army of Buchan, was the immediate retirement of its discomfited leader into England, where he soon after died, and the accession of David de Brechin to the royal cause, after an ineffectual attempt to hold out the castle of Brechin, in Angus, to which he had retreated. The brilliant success of this action, and the high excitement of spirits which it occasioned, produced the most beneficial effect upon the health of the king. "The insolence of these men," said he, in reply to those who remonstrated with him upon his imprudence, "has done more for me than all the medicines

in the world; and, to complete the cure, we shall make free to visit our friends in Buchan."*

Bruce accordingly conducted his army into this extensive Highland district, the property of his inveterate enemies the Comyns; and, letting loose upon the devoted land the whole fury of vengeance, wasted it with fire and sword, committing so indiscriminate a havoc, that, for fifty years after, men talked with horror of the harrying, or, to use a more intelligible expression, the depopulation of Buchan.† At this early period, the country through which the army passed was thickly covered with wood; and it is a remarkable circumstance, that the trunks of the oaks, which are dug up at the present day in the morasses, formed by the decay of vegetable matter, bear the visible marks of having been blackened or scathed by fire.‡ The effects of this terrible vengeance, inflicted on Buchan, were seen in the immediate submission of the whole of the adjacent country; so that his sovereignty, to use the expression of his ancient biographer, waxed every day greater; and, to the north of the Mount, there was not a single baron, of any power or "following," who did not hasten to come under his allegiance. Having succeeded so far, and being now completely restored to his wonted health, the king led his army to the siege of the castle of Aberdeen. Edward II.,

* Barbour, p. 172.

† Barbour, p. 174, l. 820. Fordun, p. 241.

"That efter that weill fifty yer
Men menyt the herschip of Bowchane."

‡ Stat. Acct. vol. ii. p. 420.

who, since his accession to the crown, had evinced an utter disrelish for the fatigues or anxieties of war, became, at last, alarmed with the progress of Bruce, and, in a fit of unusual vigour and activity, transmitted supplies to his garrisons in Scotland, and gave directions for the immediate departure of an expedition to raise the siege of Aberdeen.* But before his ships had sailed, or his army had reached its destination, the troops of Bruce, assisted by the citizens of the town, who had early distinguished themselves in the cause of liberty, attacked and stormed the castle; and, according to the usual practice, demolished the keep, and levelled the fortifications with the ground.

From Aberdeen the king proceeded in his victorious progress into Angus; and, by the bravery of one of his leaders, Philip the Forester of Platane, reduced the strong castle of Forfar, which was taken by a night escalade, and the whole of the garrison put to the sword. The approach of the Scottish army now threatened the important station of Perth; and the English monarch, in increasing anxiety, dispatched letters to the burgesses of that city, in which he conferred upon them, for the space of two years, the annual revenue proceeding from town and burgh lands, their fisheries, and mills, with the tolls levied on their bridge across the Tay, upon condition that these sums should be expended in fortifying their city against the meditated attack of the Scots.† Bruce, however, did not, at present, proceed against Perth,

* Rotuli Scotiæ, vol. i. p. 55. † Ibid. p. 56.

but, satisfied with his northern successes, dispatched his brother Edward, with a considerable force, against Galloway. It was a remarkable feature of the genius of this monarch, that he possessed the faculty, to a very eminent degree, of detecting and drawing forth the talents of those by whom he was surrounded; that he created for himself warlike leaders, whose capacity was only inferior to his own, and compelled them to act with devotedness and fidelity under the direction and control of his superior intellect. In this manner, he had bred up his brother Edward, whose character was, in some respects, very opposite to that of the king. Fiery and impetuous in his temper, courageous to the border of temerity, jealous of opposition, and restlessly ambitious, the disposition of this remarkable man required the constant check of the calm and calculating temper of the king, to preserve him from rushing into excesses which must have repeatedly brought discomfiture and ruin upon himself and the cause in which he was engaged. Under this control, however, he became one of his ablest assistants; and, so long as the activity of his disposition found a vent in war, his fidelity was as steady as his successes were brilliant. "This Edward," says an ancient writer, who received his information from those who intimately knew the man, "was a noble knight, of joyous and delightful manners, but outrageously hardy in his enterprises, and so bold in what he undertook, that he was not to be deterred by any superiority of numbers, as he had gained such renown amongst his peers, that he was accustomed very commonly to conquer a

multitude of the enemy with a handful of his own men."*

In strict consistency with this character, Edward Bruce, having in company with him as many soldiers as his brother could spare from the main army, and some of the most adventurous of his knights and barons, by a rapid march, when the English imagined that the scene of hostilities was confined to the north, broke into Galloway, and began to besiege and bring under his dominion the castles and strongholds of a district, the character of whose population seemed then to partake of the savage scenery in which they dwelt. The English governors of the country, at this time, were Aymer de Valence, who, though superseded by Edward in his civil government, had been continued in his military command; and Sir Ingram de Umfraville, one of those military coxcombs of the middle ages, who had devoted their life to shine in the ring and the tourney, and whom an exclusive attachment to chivalry had seduced into a neglect of the more important and difficult parts of the art of war. His vanity was so excessive, that, wherever he went, an esquire preceded him, bearing a red bonnet upon a spear, to mark, says Barbour, that, in prowess and worship, none could be compared to him. When he heard that his enemies had entered the country, he embraced, with confidence and alacrity, the opportunity which was presented of increasing his military renown; and, at the head of a body of twelve hundred men-at-arms, attacked

* Barbour, p. 181, l. 25.

the little army of Bruce, upon the banks of the river Cree, a romantic and beautiful stream, which separates the county of Galloway from the stewartry of Kirkcudbright, and discharges itself into Wigton Bay. He soon found, however, that he had underrated the character of his antagonists. They were, in truth, men very different from the common class of those accustomed to honour his red bonnet; veteran soldiers, nursed in the midst of perpetual privation and distress, trained to daily battle, and hardened by unceasing exposure to every species of danger. Instead of awaiting his attack, the moment his approach could be descried, they rushed to his encounter; and such was the fury of their charge, that the troops of Umfraville, advancing carelessly, as to an easy victory, were routed after a short resistance, and, seized with a panic proportionate to their former confidence, fled in every direction, leaving two hundred men dead upon the field,* whilst a great part of the fugitives gained the castle of Butel, in Galloway, and there proposed to hold out against the enemy.

The effects of this discomfiture were seen in the submission of many of the Galwegian chieftains; but the Earl of Pembroke immediately repaired to England, and having raised the feudal force of the Border counties, after a very short interval, reappeared in Galloway at the head of fifteen hundred men, so that from terror for the English, as well as disinclination to the cause of Bruce, which from the first had been violently

* Barbour, p. 181.

opposed by the Macdowalls, and other powerful septs in Galloway, the spirit of submission and reconciliation soon ceased, and the country exhibited as hostile an appearance as when it was first invaded. Another victory of Edward Bruce, however, once more checked this return to rebellion, and the circumstances under which it took place were not a little remarkable. This active leader had no sooner heard of the arrival of Pembroke, than he advanced to that part of the country through which he expected him to march, and in a short time, had the good fortune to come upon the track of the enemy, which showed by the fresh impressions of the horses' hoofs, and the fragments left behind them, that they could not be at any great distance. This was early in the morning, and a thick mist enveloped the country; but the Scots, under the guidance of their fiery chief, pressed on at a rapid pace, imagining that they had a considerable way to go, before they could overtake the enemy. Meanwhile the sun rose, and as the curtain of mist slowly rolled away, and disclosed the face of the country, Edward Bruce found, to his astonishment, that he was within a bowshot of the army of Pembroke. To retire was impossible, and would have brought certain ruin; and yet, to attack a division of fifteen hundred, with a force so infinitely inferior as that which he commanded, was next thing to madness. Yet, prompted by his characteristic audacity, and disdaining the idea of retreat or surrender, Bruce hastily stationed his camp-followers in a neighbouring valley, and placing himself at the head of his knights and men-at-arms,

charged the enemy with so much fury, that they recoiled in astonishment, imagining that the little square which attacked them—and which they outnumbered by nearly twenty to one—must, undoubtedly, be the advanced division of a larger army, which was near at hand. In the meantime, this first attack had emptied many saddles, and the squadron of Pembroke, borne back from the ground they first occupied, began to waver and fall into confusion, a symptom which was instantly detected by the eye of the Scottish leader, who rapidly formed into line, and again charged the English with such speed, and weight, and accuracy, that there was scarcely a knight or man-at-arms in the little troop, who failed in his attaint, and few who did not bear their opponents to the earth. A panic now began to seize the division of Pembroke, which was dreadfully cut up by this second attack, and ere their broken and unwieldy mass could resume and close up their ranks, or offer any thing like a front to the enemy, the light and pliant phalanx of the Scots, whose smallness rendered its evolutions more rapid and expeditious, formed for the third time, and coming down upon the fluctuating and weakened remains of Pembroke's force, put them to a total and irretrievable rout. "None," says Barbour, "were so hardy as to remain; all were dispersed and fled, pricking here and there; and their leader himself with great difficulty escaped. Of his men, some were slain, some taken prisoners, some had the good fortune to get clear away. It was, indeed, a right fair point of chivalry, and was recounted to me by a fair,

brave, and courteous knight, who was himself present, named Sir Alan of Cathcart."* This last circumstance guarantees the authenticity of a narrative, which, however extraordinary, is yet not without a parallel in the history of almost contemporary warfare.

A third battle, fought not long after this, on the banks of the Dee, upon a level tract of country known by the name of Raplock Moss, completed the triumph of Edward Bruce, and decided the fate of Galloway. Donald of the Isles, along with Sir Roland, a Galwegian knight, and a numerous army of the fierce undisciplined infantry of that country, assisted by a body of English horse, attacked the Scottish leader, and after an obstinate and bloody struggle, were completely destroyed; the island prince being compelled to fly into England—and Sir Roland, with multitudes of his friends and followers, left dead upon the field. Remains of armour and of warlike instruments, which have been dug out of the moss, confirm the site of this sanguinary contest.† In Galloway there now remained no army, either of the English, or of its own natives, to make head against the conqueror; but its glens and mountain valleys were thickly studded with towers and fortalices; and on the sea-coast were several strong castles, in which petty chiefs, inimical to Bruce, maintained a protracted and desperate resistance. In the course of a year, however, after the defeat upon the Dee, the

* Barbour, pp. 183, 184.

† Statistical Account, vol. ix. p. 638.

whole country, by the indefatigable efforts of his brother, was reduced under the peace of the king; in this space of time, thirteen castles submitted to the victor, which, according to the invariable policy of Bruce, were dismantled and rendered incapable of defence.

Whilst these successes crowned the arms of Edward Bruce in Galloway, Sir James Douglas, who had been left by the king, upon his setting out on his northern expedition, in the vicinity of his own territory of Douglasdale, increased largely the reputation which he had already acquired. Having discovered that Lord Clifford had committed the charge of his Castle of Douglas, which, since the adventure of the Douglas larder, had been rebuilt and strongly garrisoned, to Sir John de Wanton, he determined to hazard another attack. The character of Wanton, the English knight, who now held it, is given by the contemporary historian, with a minuteness, which almost belongs to personal acquaintance. "He was," says he, "a young, stout and feloun warrior, handsome in his person, joyous and cheerful in his manners; and of an especially amorous complexion. Being deeply smitten with an English lady of great beauty, it appeared, by a letter which was afterwards found upon his person, that the high-spirited damsel had refused to listen to his addresses, till he had shown himself worthy of her love, by holding, for a year, 'the adventurous Castle of Douglas,' the keeping of which, against the reiterated attacks of the Scots, was considered, in those days, a criterion of superior chivalry."*

* Barbour, p. 165.

But the military skill of Wanton, although both his love and his honour were at stake, was in no respect a match for the genius and courage of the Good Sir James. Being aware that the garrison were in want of forage, Douglas selected fourteen stout soldiers, and disguising them in the coarse wide frocks of country labourers, thrown over their armour, provided them with carts filled with sacks of grass, which they received orders to drive past the castle, at some considerable distance, yet near enough to be perfectly seen from the battlements. In a word, between the castle and the spot where the carts were to pass, he effectually concealed a party which he himself commanded; and, having arranged these preliminaries, awaited the success of the adventure, reckoning from his knowledge of Wanton, that he would readily fall into the snare which had been laid for him; nor was he disappointed in his expectation. The English governor, eager to make himself master of the forage, for the want of which his soldiers were suffering great extremities, issued out in person, at the head of a large part of the garrison; and galloped after the carriages at full speed. To his surprise, however, the countrymen who drove them, seemed in no haste to make off; and his astonishment was not lessened, when they suddenly stopt their carts, unyoked them in a moment, cast away their disguise, and throwing themselves upon their horses, assailed him with the utmost fury. Douglas now broke from his ambush in the wood; and shouting his war cry, attacked the English in the rear, so that Wanton found himself assaulted on both

sides, and cut off from either retreating into the castle, or receiving assistance from its garrison. Under all these discouragements he made a brave defence; but, in the end, he and his whole party were cut to pieces.* Douglas then attacked the castle; and after a short siege, the troops, which had been left in it, capitulated, and were sent to England; whilst its dreaded lord, who had now, for the third time, wrested his inheritance from the hands of his enemies, demolished the fortifications, and razing both the keep and the dwelling-houses within the walls to the ground, rendered it once more untenable. He then repaired to the forest of Selkirk, which, after much hard fighting, he succeeded at last in reducing entirely under the dominion of the king. "He so managed," says Barbour, who tells us he received his information from men who knew Douglas well, "that, by his uncommon activity and bravery, he brought the whole forest of Selkirk, besides Douglasdale and Jedburgh, under the peace of the king; and he, who would take in hand to recount one by one his individual victories and successes, would find them numerous indeed. I have been told," continues the historian, "that during his warlike life, he was vanquished in thirteen battles, and proved victorious in fifty-seven; for of all things, he hated sloth and idleness."†

* Barbour, p. 164. Rymer, Fœdera, vol. i. p.630, new ed.

† Barbour, pp. 162, 163. It must be recollected that, by the word battle, as here employed, we are not to understand what, in the military language of the times, was called a pitched field, but every encounter with the enemy,

The reader may not dislike to see the portrait both of the mind and person of this illustrious man, drawn by the same writer, with that affectionate and minute fidelity, which stamps upon it the rare merit of truth and originality. "The Good Sir James," says he, "was true in all his dealings, and utterly disdained to meddle with treachery or falsehood, his heart being ever fixed upon honour, whilst his manners and conduct ensured him the love of all who knew him. Of his beauty it must be owned, that it was not greatly to be commended, for his complexion was dark and weather-beaten, and his hair black and grizzled; but his limbs, excepting that they were on a large scale, were fairly proportioned; and although his shoulders were broad, and his bones massy, his body was strongly knit, and capable of great activity, as those who have often seen him have informed me. In time of peace, and when in company, his expression was gentle and benevolent, and his manners mild and agreeable, but in battle his countenance underwent a total change, and became terrible to all who beheld him. It was singular that, though in his speech he had a slight lisp, this, which in others is apt to communicate an appearance of effeminacy, from its contrast with his high and warlike bearing became him wonderfully."*

About this time an adventure happened to

whether on a smaller or a greater scale; and considering Douglas's perpetual occupation in war, from his earliest youth till his death in Spain, the assertion of Barbour is by no means improbable.

* Barbour.

Douglas which led to important results. Thomas Randolph, the nephew of Robert Bruce, since the unfortunate defeat at Methven, had joined the English cause, and taken arms against his uncle. What was the private history of this alienation, it is now impossible to ascertain, but it is evident that he was animated by a very determined spirit of hostility to the royal cause; and now, when Douglas was engaged with the reduction of Selkirk forest, Randolph, along with Adam of Gordon, Stewart of Bonkyl, and two other barons who were in the English interest, led a strong force into Tweeddale, and occupied a fortalice situated on the water of Line, which joins the Tweed a little above the town of Peebles. Douglas, however, soon becoming aware of their movement, when they little suspected his approach, surrounded the place during the night, and, after a bloody struggle, in which Gordon succeeded in cutting his way through the enemy, made Stewart and Randolph prisoners, and totally dispersed their little army. He then conducted them to the king, treating the captive knights with great courtesy, for Stewart was his own kinsman, and his fellow-prisoner, the near relative of his royal master. "Nephew," said Bruce, addressing Randolph, when brought into his presence, "thou hast for a while forsworn thine allegiance, but we must now be reconciled."—"Thou meanest to rebuke me," answered Randolph, haughtily, "but the rebuke applies with more force to thyself. Since thou hast chosen to make war upon the King of England, it became thee to support thy title on a

plain field, and after the fashion of a brave monarch, instead of having recourse to subtile and cowardly ambuscades."—"Such a contest must yet arrive," replied Bruce with great calmness and dignity, "and perchance it is not far distant. In the meantime, it is fitting that thy proud words and rude demeanour should be punished as they deserve, till thou hast been taught to bow to my right, and to understand thine own duty."* Saying this, the king ordered him into strict and solitary confinement, which, after a short interval, had the effect of bringing the youthful baron to a more wise and temperate state of mind. The consequence of this was his pardon and restoration to favour. Nor had the king, during his after life, any cause to repent of his forgiveness; on the contrary, from this moment Randolph became one of his most attached and faithful servants, and soon developed a capacity for state affairs, and a genius for the higher parts of the art of war, which left all the rest of Bruce's captains, not excepting Douglas himself, far behind him.

In the meantime the success of the King of Scotland was greatly promoted by the feeble and capricious administration of Edward the II., and the disturbed state of England. The Parliament of that country, indeed, remonstrated against the inactivity and mismanagement of the king, and represented, in strong and reproachful terms, that Scotland was likely to be utterly lost; but their remonstrances appear to have had little effect.

* Barbour, pp. 188, 189.

Indeed, although the particulars of the transaction have been lost to history, it is evident from the public documents belonging to this reign, that in the month of September 1308, the Scots, in great force, and conducted by Bruce in person, had assembled in various places upon the Borders, threatening the rich frontier town of Berwick, and meditating an invasion of England.* Orders, however, were immediately issued to raise the force of the counties of Northumberland and Westmoreland; and a fleet of twenty vessels, carrying each a complement of fifty soldiers, was dispatched for the defence of Berwick, so that for the present the expedition was postponed, and the Scottish monarch kept himself within his own country.

The state of the Western Highlands soon attracted his attention, and the king, who could now bring into the field a force very different from that with which, in the days of his distress, he had been compelled to make head against the proud and powerful chieftains who divided these districts amongst them, concentrated his army, and determined to proceed against the Lord of Lorn. The country of Lorn, which formed the stronghold of this formidable baron, was admirably fitted for making a desperate resistance against this meditated invasion. It was defended on one side by the ocean, and on the other by an extensive lake named Lochawe; it was protected from assault in its upper extremity by the rapid and precipitous torrent of the Awe, which unites

* Rotuli Scotiæ, vol. i. pp. 56, 57.

Lochawe and Loch-Etive, and its interior was rendered almost inaccessible by extensive woods and rugged and lofty mountains, the various passes through which were known only to the natives. Besides this, it possessed several strong castles, and its lord was not only powerful by land, but, from the wide extent of sea-coast which he commanded, and his possessions in the western archipelago, could muster a numerous fleet of war galleys, manned by hardy and adventurous islanders, trained to a seafaring life from their infancy, and yet ready, upon any emergency, to ship their oars, draw their light vessels upon the beach, and form themselves into a land army. The friendship of the Lord of Lorn had been closely cultivated by England during the reign of Edward I., and under the dominion of his successor he continued to maintain an intimate correspondence with the English court. It was not, therefore, without good reason that Bruce considered the reduction of the district of Lorn, and the humbling the pride of this formidable prince, a very necessary step in the subjugation of the country.

Lorn, soon becoming aware of the storm gathering around him, mustered the whole force of his vassal chiefs, both in ships and in land troops, —fortified his castles,—dispatched a fleet to Ireland for the purpose of collecting supplies for the support of his army, and the provisioning of his garrisons; and calmly awaited the approach of the Scottish king. Bruce, in the meantime, assembled his army, and being acquainted with the nature of the country into which he

had determined to carry the war, he used the precaution to arm his soldiers as lightly as possible, and to encumber himself with little baggage, and few or no horses. The whole troops served on foot, and under the command of Douglas was a large body of archers trained to war by this able leader, in his late expeditions into Selkirk Forest and Douglasdale. To an army advancing from the Lowlands through the district of Menteith and Balquhidder, the only entrance into the country of Lorn lay through the pass of Brandir,—the same tremendous defile already alluded to in this work, as the spot where Wallace defeated the Irish chief Macfadyan,* which runs along the steep and rugged base of Ben Cruachan, a noble mountain, rising to the height of three thousand feet above the sea. On the eastern side of the pass, the men of Lorn, who were about two thousand strong, concealed themselves in the thick copsewood which covered its base, expecting the entrance of the king's army, and intending to attack them the moment they had become so far entangled in the defile, as to render their escape impossible. Had Bruce fallen into this snare, his destruction must have been nearly unavoidable. On the one hand all retreat was cut off by the mountain,—the sides of which were covered by his enemies; on the other, a precipice, rugged, hideous, and almost perpendicular, descended to Lochawe; and further on, the road through the pass became so narrow, that it scarce afforded a safe footing for two men to march abreast.†

* Supra, p. 206. † Barbour, p. 190.

But the king, whose dear-bought experience in war had taught him extreme caution, remained in the Braes of Balquhidder, till he had acquired, by his spies and outskirrers, a perfect knowledge of the disposition of the army of Lorn, and the intention of its leader. He then divided his force into two columns, intrusting the command of the first, in which he placed his archers and lightest armed troops, to Sir James Douglas, whilst he himself took the leading of the other, which consisted principally of his knights and barons. On approaching the defile, Bruce dispatched Sir James Douglas, by a pathway which the enemy had neglected to occupy, with directions to advance silently, and gain the heights above and in front of the hilly ground where the men of Lorn were concealed; and, having ascertained that this movement had been executed with success, he put himself at the head of his own division, and fearlessly led his men into the defile. Here, prepared as he was for what was to take place, it was difficult to prevent a temporary panic, when the yell which, to this day, invariably precedes the assault of the mountaineer, burst from the rugged bosom of Ben Cruachan; and the woods which, the moment before, had waved in silence and solitude, gave forth their birth of steel-clad warriors, and, in an instant, became instinct with the dreadful vitality of war. But, although appalled and checked for a brief space by the suddenness of the assault, and the masses of rock which the enemy rolled down from the precipices, Bruce, at the head of his division, pressed up the side of the mountain. Whilst this party assaulted the

men of Lorn with the utmost fury, Sir James Douglas and his party shouted suddenly upon the heights in their front—showering down their arrows upon them, and, when these missiles were exhausted, attacking them with their swords and battle-axes. The consequence of such an attack, both in front and rear, was the total discomfiture of the army of Lorn; and the circumstances to which this chief had so confidently looked forward, as rendering the destruction of Bruce almost inevitable, were now turned with fatal effect against himself. His great superiority of numbers cumbered and impeded his movements. Thrust, by the double assault, and by the peculiar nature of the ground, into such narrow room as the pass afforded, and driven to fury by finding themselves cut to pieces in detail, without the power of resistance, the men of Lorn fled towards Loch-Etive, where a bridge thrown over the Awe, and supported upon two immense rocks, known by the name of the rocks of Brandir, formed the solitary communication between the side of the river where the battle took place and the country of Lorn.* Their object was to gain the bridge, which was composed entirely of wood, and, having availed themselves of it in their retreat, to destroy it, and thus throw the impassable torrent of the Awe between them and their enemies. But their intention was instantly detected by Douglas, who, rushing down from the high grounds, at the head of his archers and light-armed foresters, attacked the

* Barbour, p. 191.

body of mountaineers which had occupied the bridge, and drove them from it with great slaughter; so that Bruce and his division, on coming up, passed it without molestation; and, this last resource being taken from them, the army of Lorn were, in a few hours, literally cut to pieces, whilst their chief, who occupied Loch-Etive with his fleet, saw, from his ships, the discomfiture of his men, and found it impossible to give them the least assistance.*

Having so far succeeded in quelling the pride of this mountain and island prince, who had long held him at defiance, the king gave up his country to military plunder, and collected in it such abundance of goods and cattle, such riches in armour, in splendid vestments, and in money, that it was difficult to conceive how so remote a region could be thus opulent and prosperous. The wealth and industry, however, of the Western Isles, and the constant intercourse of the Lord of Lorn, by means of his fleets, with England and the continent, afford a sufficient explanation of the phenomenon. Bruce's next enterprise, was the siege of the castle of Dunstaffnage, in which Lorn held out, for some time, against every effort of the enemy. In those days, this fortress, which is reported to have been, at a remote period, the residence of the ancient Pictish kings, was admirably fitted for defence. It was situated on a lofty perpendicular promontory which overhangs Loch-Etive; being, from its insulated nature, invulnerable to attack, except on one side, which was

* Barbour, pp. 190, 191.

defended by walls of immense thickness, and the common accompaniments of a deep fosse and drawbridge. Bruce, however, having wasted the country, and drawn his lines so closely round the castle, that the garrison found it impossible to introduce supplies, attacked and carried the outworks when their defenders were reduced by famine, and thus compelled the Lord of Lorn, fearful of the consequences of a final assault, to surrender. He then repaired and strengthened the fortress, placed it in the hands of a faithful governor, received the homage of its humbled lord, and of the petty chiefs and barons who had been so long accustomed to consider him their master; and, having held a parliament at Dunstaffnage, which is said to have presented the extraordinary spectacle of pleadings conducted in the Celtic language, led back his army to resume his warlike labours in the low country.

END OF VOLUME FIRST.

EDINBURGH:
PRINTED [illegible] BALLANTYNE AND CO., PAUL'S WORK, CANONGATE.